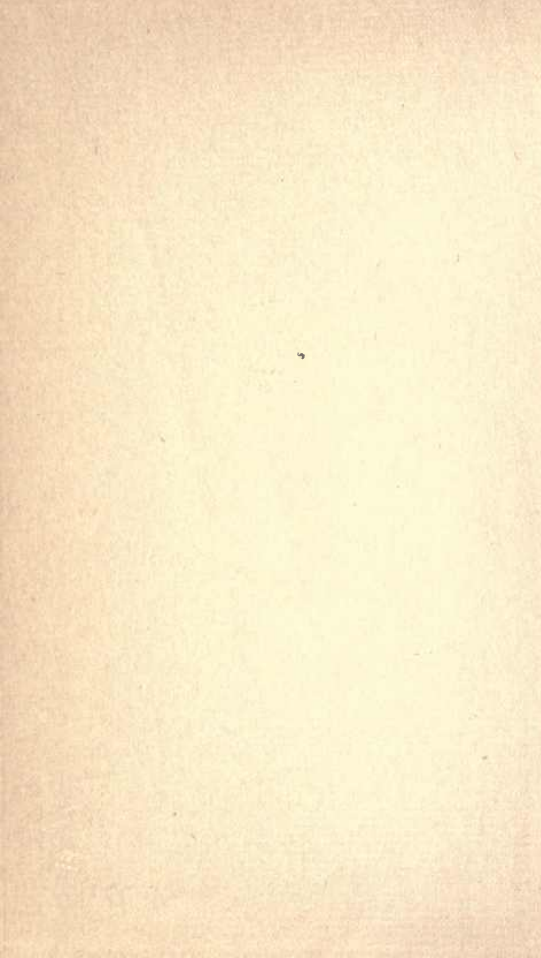




127

*Edwin*

RENTLAND SMITH  
BOOK STORE  
250 PACIFIC AVENUE  
LONG BEACH, CALIF.













GRISELDA



# GRISELDA

BY

BASIL KING

"——forgiveness, sweet  
To be granted, or received."  
—*Wordsworth.*

HERBERT S. STONE AND COMPANY  
ELDRIDGE COURT, CHICAGO  
MDCCCC

**COPYRIGHT, 1900, BY  
HERBERT S. STONE & CO**



PART I

2061939



# Griselda

## I

Lomond Lodge is one of the older houses at Ascot. That is to say, it is neither mouldily ancient nor staringly new. Time has mellowed the red of its brick, and thrown over its gabled walls a mantle of vines, but has laid no damp or disturbing hand on the comfort and beauty within.

The house was begun by the last Lord Lomond but one, in the days when Ascot was still little more than an outlying part of Winkfield and Sunninghill. In the heather and the pines of Berkshire the old peer found a touch of Scotland, within easy reach of London. Having bought land on the outskirts of the Forest of Swinley, he placed his dwelling in such a way that the ancient wood seemed part of his own domain. Lord Lomond soon came to prefer the home of his choice to that of his ancestors; and as his affection grew the house increased in

importance. Whenever needed, new wings were added, with an eye to convenience rather than effect. The result was rambling and irregular, but at once unpretentious and picturesque.

Little by little House of Tulloch in Argyllshire was despoiled of its hereditary treasures, to enrich the new mansion on the southern heath. A son carried forward the work which the father began, adorning rather than enlarging; leaving behind him in every apartment proofs of extensive travel and exquisite taste. When, therefore, young Lord Glenorchie, on the death of a distant kinsman, came into the Earldom of Lomond, he found that while House of Tulloch stood best for ancestral dignity, Lomond Lodge was the pleasanter place of abode. Lady Glenorchie, in spite of her fierce love for Scotland, thought so too; and this year she had persuaded her son to give up his August visit to the north, in order to settle down for a few quiet months under the pines which had recently become his own.

This was contrary not only to fashionable example, but to the young man's inclination. He had yielded only when he knew that it

was his mother's intention to include among their guests Lady Phillida Wimpole and Griselda Grant.

Lady Phillida had practically asked for this invitation; not for herself, for she and Lady Glenorchie were intimate friends, but for the girl to whom she had undertaken to be a social guide. Lady Glenorchie had never seen Miss Grant; and Lord Lomond had not thought it necessary to tell his mother more than the fact that he knew her. He did not say that their acquaintance had ripened rapidly.

Lady Glenorchie now wished that she had known a little more of the girl whom she had, perhaps rashly, taken under her roof. Lord Lomond wished it too. He was thinking so at the very moment when, standing at an open French window, he looked at the young lady herself. Miss Grant was sitting close to a high holly hedge, in a corner of the lawn overshadowed by a group of pines. On a table at her side was a leather box, the contents of which she was slowly reading and replacing.

Lord Lomond sauntered towards her.

"Am I disturbing you?" he asked as he came near her.

"Not a bit," she answered promptly, looking up with a smile. "Find a chair and sit down. The drowsiness of after lunch seems to have laid low every one in the house."

"So that even my society is better than none," he said, as he drew a chair towards her table, and sat down. "What a serious-looking box!"

"It *is* serious," she said. "It contains all my secrets; or, at least, all that are committed to paper."

"I thought it was a man's privilege to taste the pleasure that lies in the concealed. What can a woman ever want to hide? Isn't her life an open book?"

"I wish mine were," Griselda said with a light sigh. "I have come to the age when one knows that the power to be absolutely open and frank is the most lasting luxury in life."

"May I ask if this wisdom is the result of observation or of precocious experience?"

"If it must be one or the other let us call it experience, precocious or not, as you please. I must have chosen my words badly if I failed to convey something like the same idea the other day."

"You told me that before you could prom-

ise to be my wife there were certain matters personal to yourself, which ought to be explained."

"And that I couldn't make up my mind as to whether or not to give the explanation."

"You are not pressed for time, you know. I am willing to wait."

"I don't know that time will throw much light on the way. Oh, how I envy your English girls the simplicity of their position! Miss Dumbleton, for instance, if you asked her to marry you, could answer at once; she could at least say Yes or No, according to the inclination of her heart."

"And can't you?" he said, leaning on the table and looking her in the eyes. "What else, other than the inclination of your heart, is there to consider?"

"Many things. There is your position, for one."

"But you don't think of that."

"On the contrary I do. How can I help it? You offer me an honored name, a high position, and great wealth. I may be rich, but I am a stranger; I may be independent but I am absolutely unknown. I don't deny that apart from all considerations of love, your offer would be a temptation to any



girl like me. In marrying you I should be making what every one would call a great match. There have been moments within the last few days when I have felt like giving up everything to do it."

"Giving up what?"

"Giving up all other considerations."

"Tell me of them."

"Tell me something first. What do you know about me? When Lady Glenorchie asked me to come down here, why did she do it?"

"If you want to know the exact reason, she did it to please Lady Phillida."

"What did Lady Phillida tell her? She must have given some explanation of me."

"She didn't give any. Every one knows that Lady Phillida's girls go without saying."

"Even when they appear on the scene like Melchisedek, king of Salem, without father, without mother, and without pedigree."

"In London when one has wit, wealth, and beauty all doors are opened and few questions asked."

"I have found that true; and yet it is a little humiliating to be taken on the terms."

"I didn't say that in your case they were



the only passports. I was thinking of Lady Shetland and Mrs. de la Pole who were under Lady Phillida's wing before you. I mean only that to be with her is always a social guarantee."

"Of external qualifications."

"And general excellence."

"As far as it goes; having the same relation to the excellence which needs no guarantee as German Delft to Dutch. The one is quite content to be taken for the other; but the connoisseur is always aware of a difference in make."

"I cannot discuss that."

"Suppose I married you, and afterwards I proved to be—well, not of the sort of family into which the Glenorchies and the Lomonds have generally married? Suppose, in fact, that about my origin there was something that I should always want to hide? What then?"

Lord Lomond hesitated a moment.

"I should expect you to tell it me before marriage," he said, looking at her gravely.

"And if I did?"

Again Lord Lomond hesitated and she went on.

"I won't press you for an answer now,"

she said. "But it is one of the considerations of which I spoke. Though I haven't known you long I think I know you well—sufficiently well at least to see that your ruling trait is pride."

He started slightly, and would have spoken.

"Wait," she said, with a quick gesture of the hand. "Let me go on. You are intensely proud of being Nigel Graham. You are proud of having behind you a picturesque and historic past. You are proud of being its living incarnation. You are proud of every link in your lineage. You are proud of the very syllables of your name."

"Do I show that?" he asked, flushing.

"No, you don't. I divine it; and I like it. Only, if you married me, you would certainly do so thinking I was not your equal. What I should have to tell you and what I should have to conceal would alike make you think so. You would love me, no doubt; but you would love me with a reserve, with a regret that you should be the first of the two families you represent to break the traditions of the race, to bring into the blood anything like a stain."

"I think you might permit me to be the best judge of that."

"No, I can't," she replied proudly. "It concerns myself too closely. I am certain that until you saw me you never thought of marrying out of some of the great families which you consider equal to your own. I am certain, too, that if you did so, you would consider it a misfortune."

"All that is very much out of date, nowadays. You speak as if I were——"

"A survival. That is what you are. In Piccadilly, in Paris, in India, or at Ascot, in spite of all your outward modernity, you are at heart the great Scotch lord of two hundred years ago; just as your mother is the great Scotch lady."

"Oh, as for my mother," Lord Lomond said, moving uneasily, "you know she was a Campbell of Kilronan. She thinks the sun shouldn't shine except for the great families of Argyll."

"And I do not agree with her," Griselda said with spirit. "I could never take, nor consent to pretend to take, that point of view."

"That is where the American in you shows itself."

"Of that I am no judge. I only see that on this great subject; which more or less determines one's whole attitude towards life, Lady Glenorchie and I are as wide apart as——"

"Feudalism from freedom."

"I was going to say the New World from the Old. When I lived in France the Prince d'Iéna nicknamed me the Declaration of Independence; but Madame de St. Caste used to call me the Rights of Man."

"I should have made it the Goddess of Liberty."

"While you and Lady Glenorchie always keep me humming, *Scots wha hae*."

"But we are wandering from our subject," he said smiling.

"Quite so. I was about to say that owing to our wide differences of opinion, as well as to other circumstances, Lady Glenorchie would never consent to receive me as your wife."

"In the end she would consent to anything for me."

"She doesn't like me."

"There you are wrong. She admires you immensely."

"She admires me in a certain hostile way

because I have her own fastidiousness in dress and personal surroundings."

"She thinks you have the best taste and the best manners and the most dignity of any girl she knows. She said so when you first came down."

"She would scarcely say it now."

"Why not? The facts are equally evident."

"Because in Lady Glenorchie's opinion the possession of such qualities without good birth is a pretension and a liberty. It is like the presumption of newly rich persons who emblazon on their carriages the arms of noble families because they happen to bear the same names. Good birth is to Lady Glenorchie what charity was to St. Paul. Without it all other virtues profit nothing. I might give my body to be burned, but until I could prove some remote connection with the landed gentry I could never be adopted by her as a daughter."

"I admit the truth of what you say, but you mustn't count it for more than it is worth. My mother, like most of us, is of a mixed character. She is proud, but she has good principles; she has a great deal of prejudice, but also a great deal of heart.

She is at once a woman of the world and a Puritan; disdainful of those who are not her equals, and yet capable of humbling herself in the dust."

"She is hard to win."

"Yes, but being won she yields without reserve. You will find it so when once she knows your goodness."

"I fear I am perverse enough only to display my goodness where I have been admitted for love."

"She will love you too," he said eagerly. "I see it even now. She is conscious at this moment that in fighting against you she is fighting against her better self. She will give way."

"Possibly; but even so I doubt if such an unwilling affection would be that with which I could be content."

Griselda Grant spoke quietly, but her eye flashed, and the color rose to her cheek.

"I am sorry," Lord Lomond said gently. "I had hoped such different things when you came here."

"And I too," she said.

"You?" he asked, glancing at her quickly. "What did you hope? Is it possible that you cared for me a little?"

"Of all the many things I may have to tell you," she said with simple gravity, "that shall be the last."

"I can't make you out," he said, with a gesture of impatience. "You speak as calmly as if our marriage would be an affair purely of the intellect, into which the heart did not enter. Is all that you have said meant to prepare me for your refusal? If so, I'd rather know at once."

"I am not ready yet to give you my decision. You asked me to take time, and I'm only taking it. But I shall not need much more. At this moment I am waiting to see someone whom I must first consult. I can say nothing till I see him. He has just arrived from America. I expect him here to-day."

"And you will go by his decision?"

"Not at all. But I want his advice. In the end I shall act on no decision but my own."

"Who is he? A relative?"

"No, not a relative, and yet nearer than one. His name is Grayburn—Botolph Grayburn. He was my father's friend. When my father and mother died he took me and brought me up. I owe everything to him."



I could not act in so grave a matter as this without consulting him."

"You're very prudent, Griselda. I don't think I ever knew any one so much so, and so young."

"Yes," she said, smiling. "I'm obliged to be prudent. But don't call me Griselda, Lord Lomond—at least not yet. It will be harder, you know, to go back to the more formal name if that should be necessary. Let everything be as it has been for a little while longer. You won't regret it in the end, whatever answer I may give you."

"I can only bow to your wishes."

"Even though ungraciously. But let us change the subject. I have something to show you. Look; that's my father."

As she spoke she drew from among the papers in the box beside her a small photograph. He took it from her and looked at it silently.

"Of course it's old," she explained, "and faded. It was taken over twenty years ago."

"He's dead?" Lord Lomond asked, glancing from the photograph to her.

"Yes. He died in America just before I was born. Do you notice a likeness to any one?"



"Yes," said Lomond instantly, "to me. It's curious, isn't it? One would almost have called it a family resemblance. When did you remark it?"

"The first time I saw you; at Lady Keene's. It impressed me so, that I asked Lady Phillida who you were. Then she called you to us, you remember."

"I should suspect some unknown relationship between us," said Lomond, looking steadily at the photograph, "only that everybody says I am a 'throw back' to the Tullochs; and except the last Lord Lomond and his family there have been practically no Tullochs for a hundred years. I am going to add the name to mine under the Queen's sign-manual. I shall have the right to do so because of my succession to the Lomond title."

"Tell me about that," said Griselda, taking the photograph from his hand, and putting it back into the box, which she closed. "How do people succeed to titles? I am so ignorant of all such things."

She leaned back in her garden chair, and gazed at him steadily under her long dark lashes. For the moment his eyes were

turned from hers, and he did not see how she was studying him.

"It is very simple," he said, assuming an indifference which he did not feel, fearing lest Griselda should again accuse him of pride. "I succeeded to the barony of Glenorchie on my father's death. That is a comparatively modern title, and, since it belongs to the peerage of Great Britain, gives me my seat in the House of Lords. The Earldom of Lomond, on the other hand, is very ancient and belongs to the peerage of Scotland. It was one of the original Seven Earldoms which play such a part in early Scottish history. Like the other old Scotch Earldoms it descends in the female line as well as in the male. When the last Lord Lomond died some months ago, the male line became extinct, as it has done twice before. The title and entailed estates then passed to the heirs of Alison Tulloch, who married the first Lord Glenorchie. Since I am Alison Tulloch's great grandson I inherit her rights. That's all."

"So that if Alison Tulloch had lived all these years she would have been Countess of Lomond in her own right."

"Precisely. She would have lost the

barony of Inversnaid as I did, but she would have retained the earldom."

"Why did the male line become extinct when Lord Lomond died? Did he never marry?"

"Yes; he married Lady Jane Macpherson, and had one son. This son went to the bad and was killed I believe somewhere in America. There was a report, my mother says, that he was hanged, but if old Lord Lomond knew he would never tell. In any case it is certain that he died before his father, and that there was no heir between him and me."

"Did the son ever live here?"

"Never to my knowledge. He and the father were always at odds, so that the one remained here and the other at House of Tulloch. Naturally we know little about them, for the relationship was so distant that there never was any intimacy between them and us. In later years Lord Lomond had the same dislike of me that old men often have of their heirs and would not see me."

"You knew him though?"

"I met him once only. I remember him as a handsome old man with a hard expres-

sion, just as he looks in his portrait in the hall. He had the air of hating the whole world and of being aware that the whole world hated him. He belonged to the Court during the Prince Consort's time, and the Queen told me when I dined at Windsor that she had a great respect for him. His later life was lonely and he spent most of his time in travel, collecting the pretty things, of which, as you see, this house is full."

"This was his home then?"

"Yes; he disliked Scotland. After the death or disappearance of Inversnaid, the son, he shut up House of Tulloch."

"You have been there, I suppose?"

"Just to look at it."

"Is it a fine place?"

"Magnificent, but neglected. When I have time I mean to put it in order and make it my Scotch residence. Glenorchie Castle is only a small house, with no particular beauty. The whole of Glen Tulloch is wild and romantic, one of the finest bits of scenery in the north. Whenever I think of it I seem to see you there as mistress. My mother could keep Glenorchie Castle, and she has her own house at Tunbridge Wells.

You would have no interference either here or at House of Tulloch——”

At this moment the young man was interrupted by the arrival of a servant bearing on a silver salver a card which he offered to Miss Grant. Having glanced at the name Griselda passed the card to Lord Lomond.

“Show Mr. Grayburn into the library,” she said to the servant, “and say I will come at once.”

“At last the oracle is to speak,” Lomond said, rising as she rose. “Shall I carry your box for you?”

“Thanks, no. I want you to stay here. If the oracle is to speak I prefer that it shall be before having seen you.”

She gave him a friendly nod and smile, and went towards the house.

Lomond sat down again and gazed after the girl's slight, graceful figure, as she walked across the lawn. She was not tall, but carried herself with dignity. With unusual charm, rather than unusual beauty, she produced upon the beholder an impression of neatness, completeness, intelligence, independence, and pride.

“I will marry her,” said Lomond to himself, “if I have to fight her for her own

hand. She has in her something better than good blood."

And yet he had some misgiving.

## II

When Griselda Grant entered the library she laid the box she carried on the nearest table, and went forward with outstretched hands to meet the man who stood awaiting her.

"How good you are to come!" she cried. "To see you makes me feel at home again."

"Especially," he said, stooping to kiss her, "as we have no home but in each other."

"Why have you stayed so long at that dreadful Limping Creek?"

"In order to enrich you by an additional thousand pounds a year."

"The reason is insufficient. I would rather have lost the thousand pounds——"

"And retained my society. Thank you, my dear. What you say is all the more charming from the fact that I have come back, not to leave you any more."

"Time alone can make me credit that. I can't conceive of your presence as other than intermittent like a fever."

"But now it is to be chronic like the gout."

They both laughed, and Griselda said:

"Sit down. I want to look at you. I want to feast my eyes on your dear, old face. To see you again, after the life I have been leading, is like going back to Nature after Art. It is like refreshing one's sense of sight with a White Mountain landscape, after the carriages and dresses of Hyde Park."

"I have an excellent tailor," Grayburn said, as they sat down side by side on a leather covered sofa. "I haven't come straight from Limping Creek. I should be sorry to suggest wild nature too directly."

"You know what I mean," she cried, laughing again. "If you suggest nature it is because you suggest home. If you make me think of the White Mountains it is because you bring me a sense of rest. Besides, you are more rugged than the men I meet. They are all hot-house grown, while you have pushed your way up among the hills."

"I don't know whether that is flattery or not. Personally I think I'd rather be a palm-tree than a pine."

"I like you better as you are. Any woman would."



"Am I to judge by this approbation that the men you have met have not merited your good opinion?"

"Oh, I don't say that," she said hastily. "On the contrary, indeed. Perhaps the fact of having spent one's life under a pine-tree, so to speak, makes one all the more appreciative of a grove of palms."

"For preference or for contrast?"

"For the advantage the one gives the other."

As she spoke Griselda was unconsciously comparing Grayburn to the young man she had just left on the lawn. The difference between them was more than one of age or character. It was the difference which springs from circumstance and surroundings, from point of view and manner of life. Wherever there were resemblances between them the dissimilarities became even more distinct.

Both were tall—Lomond straight and soldierly like a life-guardsman on duty, Grayburn a little bent like a watchman peering through a storm. Both were strong—Lomond like a young giant who has never tried, Grayburn like an athlete who has spent his life in contest. Both had distinction—

Lomond that of leisure and command, Grayburn that of energy and conquest. Both had faces to attract attention—Lomond's from its honesty, simplicity, and calm, Grayburn's from its vigor, virility and determination. Both were handsome—Lomond fair like Galahad going forth to the quest with only the knowledge of good, Grayburn bronzed like Lancelot coming back, with the knowledge of good and evil.

A close observer would have seen in Grayburn a man of experience rather than of feeling, of will rather than of emotion. The deep-set, steel-blue eyes which rested on Griselda were quick and keen, but they were not tender. The long, strong, sinewy, sun-browned hand which held hers, closed with the grip of iron rather than with the grasp of love. The penetrating regard with which he looked at her during the minutes when they were talking lightly was one of scrutiny rather than of affection.

Griselda, on her part, was too frankly glad to see him to do more for the moment than admire. She flattered him and paid him compliments; she openly praised his iron-gray hair, his iron-gray Vandyke beard, his careful dress, and his simple unconscious-

ness of manner. It pleased her to note that a rough life had not roughened him, and that if it had made him a man of adventure, it had left him a man of the world.

He was forty-seven, but looked older, and seemed to Griselda older still. She had never known a time when he was not engaged in active affairs and connected with white-haired men who were long ago dead and gone. It was only within recent months, since she had mingled more with the world, that she had begun to see that he might still be numbered among men comparatively young.

In her childhood she had adored him; during her girlhood she had honored him; but since she had become a woman she had begun to see that, closely as their lives had touched, they were strangers to each other. She had never seen much of him, but during the last four years the little had been less. At each meeting she found something new in him to puzzle her. She was not afraid of him; she did not distrust him; she only saw him more and more as a man, and less and less as a divine, directing Providence. He was always kind to her but silent; generous but perplexing.

"Now let us talk of business," he said, with that suddenness of change to which Griselda was accustomed. "Let me see; how long is it since we have met?"

"Not quite six months."

"Really? So much has happened in the time that it seems longer. You know I am displeased with you?"

"I didn't know. I only guessed it."

The tone of his last words caused Griselda to bridle a little, for the weeks in which she had been her own mistress had already developed her sense of independence.

"You should not have taken so many serious steps without my knowledge," he said.

"I didn't know where to write to you after you left Limping Creek."

"Then you should have remained with the Macleods."

"That did not suit my purposes."

"And may I venture to ask what they are?"

"Certainly. Catechize me, and you will receive prompt and comprehensive answers."

"Then, first of all I should like to know how you come to be here at Lomond Lodge, the last house in England where I should expect to find you."

"Simply because Lady Glenorchie asked me. There are several guests; and I am one of the number."

"Why did she ask you?"

"I am given to understand that it was not for my charms," she said smiling, "but because Lady Phillida Wimpole begged for the invitation."

"And who is Lady Phillida Wimpole?"

"She is a respectable widow. She is Lord Hull's sister; and I think her husband was an admiral."

"I don't mean that," he said impatiently. "What is she to you? Why are you living with her? How did you come to know her?"

"Through an advertisement in the *Morning Post*."

"You mean?"

"That I grew very tired of the Macleods. They are good people, but impossible. After a week or two with them I could endure their society no longer. Then, just by accident, I saw Lady Phillida's advertisement. Of course, there was no name given, and it was very discreetly worded. It was simply to the effect that a widowed lady, an earl's daughter, was willing to chaperon a young

lady; nothing more. One had to write to some initials, in care of a library. After two or three letters Lady Phillida asked me to call at her house in Queen's Gate. We became friends at once. I liked her, and I know she likes me. Certainly neither of us as yet has regretted our bargain."

"Which was for how much?"

"The money part of it was for a thousand pounds. At least that was what Lady Phillida called the premium. I also pay a share of the house-keeping expenses when we are at Queen's Gate."

"I have heard of such arrangements, though I never supposed them really to exist. I must take you out of this trap, Griselda, my child."

"It isn't a trap, Mr. Grayburn. It is something I have done knowingly, and with a definite purpose before me."

"A purpose to——"

"To observe," she said quickly. "I wanted to know whether what we thought of was worth the trouble, whether the battle was worth fighting."

"And may I ask what opinion you have formed?"

"None, as yet. That is why I asked you

to come to England. There are so many things which we must talk over together."

"I thought we understood each other."

"Never quite. That is to say, I never was wholly sure whether or not I wanted to make this struggle. Even if it should not be hard it would certainly be unpleasant. That is why I have come among these people. I wanted to know whether the end was worth the means, and whether in the new sphere I should be happier than in the old."

Grayburn smiled slightly, notwithstanding a growing expression of anxiety.

"You are abnormally discreet, but you are right perhaps," he said. "And what is the outcome of the trial?"

"I can't tell you that in a sentence, even if I can tell you at all. I have been happy here—certainly happier than at St. Germain, and even than at home. The life I have been living is the life I should choose—with modifications. But——"

"There is no *but*. It is the life to which you were born, to which you have a right."

"Possibly. But I was going to say there are so many ways of entering it."

"You have only one."



"No; I have at least two. I might marry Lord Lomond."

"I thought some idea of the kind might have been suggested," Grayburn said, without any sign of surprise, "but of course it is not to be entertained."

"Why do you say, 'of course'? I *am* entertaining it."

Grayburn flushed. When he spoke his voice shook slightly.

"Because, Griselda, when you marry any one, it must be me."

"Oh," said the girl softly, her eyes dilating, as she looked fixedly at her companion. "That is a new thought to me. I didn't know that you expected it. Why did you never tell me?"

"I left you to guess."

"It was a good deal to leave to chance."

"I have not trusted chance, my child. I have trusted you. I knew that when the moment came we should think alike. As I have come to your help, so you will come to mine."

"And can I give you no help but that?"

"Listen to me, Griselda, and you will see. I was your father's friend. We were boys together at Harrow. We shared in the same



pleasures and the same punishments. From the peccadilloes of school life we passed on to worse. Together we were cast off by our families. Together we went to America. Your father's marriage was but an incident in a wild career. Your mother was a simple girl of humble birth who had followed him from Scotland, with nothing but a wedding ring to keep him from forgetting her as he had forgotten many another of her kind. Then three hard, straight blows were dealt by Fate in quick succession. Your father died, and you know the manner of his death. That night you were born. Before morning your mother, broken with suffering and shame, had gone to the only refuge one could wish her."

"I know all that," the girl said, with a touch of proud impatience.

"True; but what you don't know is this, that from that moment I was changed. I resolved that life should never lead me where it had brought your father. Friendless in a strange land, disowned by my family and disgraced by my past, I set myself to retrace my steps, to win back something of what I had lost. I resolved to return to my own country able to recon-

quer the position from which I had been expelled."

"And you have done so nobly and bravely. Now you can have what you have worked for without me. I have counted for nothing in your plans."

"That was so at first. You *did* count for nothing when I began. I took you because you were your father's child, and because you had no one to look to but me. I didn't want you then; you were a burden to me, but I could not cast you off. Then, little by little, I began to see that in the new life I had planned you might give me more help than any one. I fed you, clothed you, taught you with that end in view. I took what money your father left you and made it more. I made you rich in growing rich myself. I kept all your father's secrets with the intention to benefit not only myself but you. The time has come for us to act together, to enjoy together what we—at least I—have worked for."

"Then into your designs love has not entered?"

"Yes, largely. I have loved you, Griselda; you must know that. We could not have lived together as we have done, you grow-

ing up and I growing old, without affection."

"The affection of father and child."

"Scarcely that. But——" He broke off with a shrug of the shoulders.

"I am to understand, then," said Griselda, trying to speak calmly and to conceal her amazement, "that you propose a marriage which on both sides would be one of some love but more ambition."

"If you choose to put it so. I don't say that it is just."

"I should have preferred a marriage of some ambition and more love."

"We are strangely situated, my child. You have certain ends to gain, and I have certain others. We can be surest of success in acting as one."

"I can't marry you, Mr. Grayburn," the girl said quietly. "Whatever else may happen, that never will."

"You think so now, Griselda, because you don't know all the reasons for it."

"I know one against it, however; one that is quite decisive."

"Which is?"

"I ought to tell you. I care for some one else."

"This young man here?"

"Yes."

"You have chosen badly."

"I have not chosen at all. It came."

"And he——?"

"He feels as I do."

"I am sorry," he said, very softly, "because it will mean so much unhappiness. It can never come to anything."

"Perhaps not. But I don't mind the unhappiness. I would rather have that than not have——"

"I see," he interrupted, in a tone that was not unkindly. "You are at the age which people call romantic. We all pass through it and come out into something else."

"I would rather not live till then."

"Unhappily one must. You will outlive this pretty period as you have outlived the time when you were such a sweet little vision on the rocks at home—in long curls and a short frock. But don't forget that each stage has its charms. There are compensations even in growing old."

"I am a woman now——"

"A very young one."

"But still a woman. Childhood is a

growth, womanhood a condition. In childhood change is quick and easy; in womanhood, even in young womanhood, it is slow and hard."

"But still it comes."

"Whatever other change may come, the one you speak of never will."

"As you grow older you will learn to speak with less decision; you will be less sure."

"On other points, perhaps, but not on this."

"On all. You will see. At your age every year is one of progress; every month, every day, makes clearer the necessity of basing the castle of our happiness not on cloud but on the solid earth."

"I have the right to use my own judgment, even if it were wrong."

"And I have the right to save you from irreparable mistake."

"I am free——"

"In law, but not in duty."

"I admit I owe you gratitude."

"You owe me everything. You owe me more than if I had been your brother or your father. All that you have I have given you; all that you are I have made you. You

come here into the haughtiest society in the world, among people who treat princes as little more than their equals, and you take your natural place among them. It is because I have given you the power. If you are beautiful it is because I have nourished you; if you are clever it is because I have trained you; if you are rich it is because I have worked for you. If you are able at this moment to take this tone of independence it is because I have given you the means. And, as you know, there is more before you than anything to which you have attained; only it is I who alone have the power to bestow it on you. Griselda, my child, you belong to me as though you were my own creation. Your good sense itself must tell you so."

"I admit all your claims but one. I am ready to give my life to you in love and service."

"But not in marriage?"

"Not in marriage."

"I don't care for love; I am in no need of service; marriage is the only means by which you can reward me for all that I have done."

"You should not have saved my life if

you were going to put such a price upon it."

"It was worth it to me."

"But not to me."

"Listen to me, Griselda," he said, taking her hand in his. "I don't want you to think me ungenerous, but I must make you understand. I don't want to be brutal, but I must be frank. I want to save you from suffering, and so I would save you from any conflict of your will with mine."

"I am not afraid of it."

"Oh, yes you are."

"If so, only because of my love for you."

"If you would but accept the fact we should both escape a great deal of struggle which will be painful to me, and fruitless to you."

"What fact must I accept?"

"The fact that on the day I choose to name and in whatever place may please me, you will be ready to become my wife."

"Are you so sure?"

"So sure."

"And yet you said just now that in growing older one speaks with less decision."

"As a rule. Some occasions are exceptional."



"I do not think this one."

"There is no doubt as to who will be the victor when the contestants are matched unequally."

"So one would have said in the case of David and Goliath."

"Life is less of a battle than of a game. The prize goes not to the bravest, but to the most skilled."

"It is a game which I could play."

"But to which you have never yet put your hand."

"I could learn."

"There are no rules. There is only experience."

"I should be cautious."

"But I unscrupulous."

"I should give you that advantage and win."

Grayburn laughed.

"I like your spirit," he said. "You remind me of your father. In time to come your pluck will stand you in good stead. But this game is to be mine. I am more than your match, as you will see. But I am willing to make you a proposition. I will be generous."

"Justice is all I ask."



"You shall have it and more. I will not insist on any of the points I have pressed in this conversation. I shall waive what I think my rights, and shall overlook what seems to me your duty. We shall not discuss the subject further. We shall only play the game in silence, you with your resources, I with mine; and the prize shall go to the victor."

"I will not accept your terms," she replied, with dignity. "I will not put myself in the position of a hunted creature eluding chase, or a plotter evading counter-plot. I have given you my answer. I can only stand by it. I do not see how any further discussion can make clearer the situation."

"I agree with you there," Grayburn said promptly. "I think we have talked enough. You know my mind, and I know yours. For the rest we had better wait."

"You have made me very unhappy. You must be aware of that."

"Possibly, my child; but that will pass. You must try not to be more angry with me than you can help."

"I love you too much to be angry; I am only deeply hurt."

"The worst of wounds will heal."

He rose as he spoke, and she followed his example.

"Don't you think I ought to go away?" he asked, "and if so, when shall I see you again? I am at the hotel."

"You can't go till after you have seen my friends. Lady Glenorchie is sure to be on the lawn or in the garden. It is almost tea-time."

"Ought I to meet her?"

"You must."

"Then I shall not shrink from duty."

"I want you to see Lady Phillida, too."

"I shall feel like Perseus coming to deliver Andromeda from the dragon."

"She is not a dragon, as you will find."

"I know her already," Grayburn said, laughing, as they moved towards the door; "the widowed lady, an earl's daughter, willing to chaperon a young girl."

"Wait."

"Willingly. I could have waited longer."

Griselda smiled, but said nothing. She was excited by the fact that her will was pitted against his. She had wild blood in her veins, and a sense of struggle brought with it something of elation. Besides, she was almost glad that her very desperation was

driving her into the haven where she scarcely dared to seek a refuge, but in which she would gladly be.

### III

After Miss Grant had left him Lord Lomond reseated himself in his wicker chair and fell into a deep reverie.

From the oriel window of her sitting-room his mother watched him anxiously. A mingling of pain and anger was rising in her heart—of pain because her only son was on the eve of his first suffering, of anger that such mischance as she now suspected should touch her house or her.

When Griselda Grant had come to Lomond Lodge, Lady Glenorchie had liked her. She was only another pretty girl whom Phillida Wimpole had taken under her protection, and Lady Glenorchie was fond of freshness and beauty about her, as she was of flowers and sunshine. Living out of the noisy world, priding herself on being a great country lady, changing her abode only from Rusthall Court to Glenorchie Castle, and from Glenorchie Castle back to Rusthall Court, she nevertheless enjoyed the breath of London air which her son and her son's

friends brought into her tranquil life. She would not go to the world, but she liked to have the world come to her. She wanted to be sought out and honored by those whom she herself might perhaps neither have honored nor sought out. She opened her doors with discreet and gentle welcome to the new, the crude, and the clever, as well as to the stately and the old. She did so somewhat as the Queen gathers around her royal table princes, peers, and politicians, herself too great to make distinctions among those of lesser rank, permitting them to approach her, but remaining in her own thought and person perceptibly apart.

Lady Glenorchie had accepted Griselda Grant as she had accepted a hundred other girls. She had gone further still. She had found in the girl something new and sympathetic—a rare union of those virtues which Lady Glenorchie most commended, and which she feared were growing out of date—beauty going with high-breeding, self-reliance with gentleness, self-respect with deference to others, intelligence with sweetness, and fastidious refinement with simplicity. Griselda's dark hair, dark eyes, and rich, creamy complexion had pleased Lady Glen-

orchie from the very contrast they presented to what had been at the same age her own attractions.

For the first few days of her visit at Lomond Lodge Griselda was very happy. She had met with instant favor, and hoped to win affection. Then the manner of her hostess suddenly changed; it became not merely cold but hostile. Griselda was at first surprised and then indignant.

Lady Glenorchie on her part was not happy. She had had confidence that Lomond would never deal lightly with his name and place. She had that confidence still, only with alarming possibilities of struggle and pain coming into view. A week had not passed after Lady Phillida's arrival, when Lady Glenorchie began to detect in her son's manner towards Miss Grant that subtle touch of intimacy, which must have dated from a closer acquaintance than that of which the mother had been aware. For almost the first time in her life Lady Glenorchie was conscious of a strong antagonism between herself and a member of that outside world from whom she had thought herself too far removed for conflict. The American girl was quick to perceive and resent it. It

stung her pride and humiliated her self-respect.

"Lady Glenorchie," she said to herself, "thinks me an adventuress, ready to ensnare her son. How dare she have such a thought!"

And afterwards, with the fairness which was one of her characteristics, would come the reflection, "Why should she not? After all, is she not justified? I come among these people from no one knows where, giving no credentials. Lady Phillida's account of me is inconsequent and confused. This lady sees that her son loves me. Were I to marry him, could I do so otherwise than in the character which she ascribes to me?"

But reason as she would, the girl could not meekly bend to the constant, courteous, barely perceptible indications of Lady Glenorchie's ill-opinion to which she was daily subjected. A word, a gesture, a quiver of the eyelids, on the one side never failed to receive its response from the other. Hostilities were in that secret, diplomatic stage which precedes the open rupture, but the situation was strained as far as it could be, while remaining generally unobserved. Miss Grant had begged Lady Phillida to return



to London, and Lady Glenorchie began to feel that she must do the same. As she watched her son from her sitting-room window she had the inspiration to consult him on the subject. This would be to hasten the battle, but it might lead perhaps to victory; in any case it would be better than suspense. Lady Glenorchie took a book and her work-bag and went down stairs.

Her appearance on the terrace roused Lord Lomond from his reverie. He rose at once and crossed the lawn towards her, meeting her as she came down the steps. Both in beauty and bearing, mother and son were matched—he long and strong of limb, and frank and fearless of face; she the embodiment of ageing elegance, slender, graceful, gracious, a being who had never known any struggle for existence nor any competition for success, to whom all that is lofty and lovely in life had come as a matter of course. Lady Glenorchie was not modern; she might have been a Cosway beauty growing old. Her mental horizon was not a wide one, but it was clear and picturesque. Her conception of life was that of a round of high duties worthily performed. The men of her family had fought for their country,



and their names were on every page of the history of the Black Watch; the women had married Scotch lords and lairds, their equals in birth and breeding. The base, the common, the sordid, had always been removed from them; they had lived on a high level, and left behind them a legacy of pride. Lady Glenorchie had entered into it, transmitting it to her son. It was evident in all her actions; it underlay her gentleness of manner and modesty of speech; it was in the kindness of her eyes, and the sweetness of her smile; it seemed to emanate from the very laces and silks of her attire, and from the gems upon her small white hands; it was in the courteous condescension with which she welcomed her son's newest friend, as well as in the homage with which she bent before the Queen—a dominant, unconquerable, illimitable pride of race and place and personal circumstance, which could scarcely imagine a slight upon itself, and found it hard to admit an equal.

As Lomond held out his hand to take her bag and book Lady Glenorchie received the attention with a smile which seemed at once the acceptance and acknowledgment of homage.

"I came out, Nigel," she said, as she walked with him across the lawn to the shady corner he had just left, "because I saw you were alone."

"I'm glad you've come, mother," he replied. "We see so little of each other when the house is full."

"It's a little too full, just now," she said. "Don't you think so?"

"We have room for more, however," he answered, moving for her a chair into the shadow of the group of pines.

He put a footstool at her feet, and arranged her long scarf of white lace around her shoulders. Then he placed at her side a table for her work bag and her book. Lady Glenorchie's delicate beauty seemed to command these small acts of service, as a fragile work of art calls for care.

"I was not thinking of quantity so much as of quality," she said as her white jeweled fingers opened slowly the golden fastening of the bright-colored silken bag. "Personal qualities are like certain perfumes. They are subtle, but all pervading."

Lady Glenorchie's emphasis was as fine as the fading pink on her cheek, or the old lace on her shoulders. All three were equally

exquisite in their different natures, and equally perceptible.

"Do you mean Marignan?" Lomond asked, as he sat down. "He *is* a little before the public eye, so to speak, when he is in a house. But then, he is a Frenchman and an artist, so that he can't be just like ourselves. And besides, Lady Phillida draws him on."

"Monsieur de Marignan is a Frenchman and an artist, and you might also have added, *un gentilhomme*. He could nerve be *de trop*."

"Oh, there is some one who is *de trop*?" said Lomond, with a slight start and looking enquiringly at his mother. "Who is it? It can't be Waynflete?"

"No, it is not Mr. Waynflete," said Lady Glenorchie, examining critically the piece of embroidery on which she was at work.

"Nor Miss Dumbleton?"

"Certainly not."

"Nor Lady Phillida?"

"Not precisely."

"Then it is precisely——"

"I must not let you think," said Lady Glenorchie, slightly shifting her ground, "that I object personally to any of our

guests. I am not annoyed; I am only anxious."

"On whose account, mother?"

"Miss Grant's."

"And why?"

Lord Lomond's voice was soft and deep; his attitude, as he leaned across the table towards his mother, impressively still.

"I am anxious," Lady Glenorchie said tranquilly, choosing among her many-colored silken threads, "that there should be no misunderstandings. It is natural for so young a girl to take little attentions that signify nothing as meaning a great deal more."

"Do you mean attentions from me?"

"Yes, Nigel. It could be neither for her happiness nor yours if false ambitions——"

"On whose part?"

"On hers, naturally."

"I don't think she has any."

"But if she had? if she were to entertain them? For a girl of her class it could only——"

"What class, mother?"

"Don't ask me to define what must be evident of itself, Nigel. I hold no brief against her. I am speaking for her good.

And I repeat that she might easily understand your manner towards her to mean what you and I know it never could mean."

Lomond leaned back in his chair, and for a moment closed his eyes. In his expression there was something of pain, something of determination.

"Suppose," he said, after a few moments' silence, looking towards his mother, but not changing his position—"I only say suppose,—Miss Grant and I were to wish to marry?"

"You would not marry a—a—a foreigner, Nigel, I hope."

"Why not? The Duke of Perthshire married a foreigner."

"Yes; a Colonna. That is scarcely the same thing."

"And Lord Oban."

"Yes; a Windisch-Grätz."

"And Lord Banavie."

"A Castellane. None of these were Americans."

"But do you object to Americans in themselves, all and singly?"

"No, of course not. Lady Skye is an American; Mrs. Murray of Invermenzies is another. These were women of position in

their own land before they became so in ours."

"And Miss Grant is a lady. You can't refuse to admit that, mother."

"Undoubtedly a lady. Your Solicitor's daughter, too, is a lady; only not such a lady as you should marry. I know you are not thinking of it; but since you have raised the question I discuss it."

"But if I were thinking of it?"

"It would be to decide against it."

"And if I did not?"

"Are these questions to any purpose?" she asked, turning for the first time from her work, and looking at him with a smile which seemed to take from her words their haughtiness of tone. "Do we not both know that Lomond of Tulloch and Glenorchie of Glenorchie could never do anything unworthy of his name?"

"I hope so," he responded, with a pride equal to her own. "May there not, however, be a question as to what is unworthy, and what is not?"

"Never in my mind, and, I think, never in yours. Those born in a certain rank have an instinctive sense of dignity and honor."

"And must dignity and honor always have the first place in life?"

"Perhaps not. I am scarcely prepared to grade and tabulate our duties. People like ourselves have no need to give reasons to justify their acts."

"I should like to have some for mine."

"There are conditions, Nigel, which are unaffected by argument. There are circumstances in which all the reasons you could plead would be one way; while the decision of one's hereditary, infallible judgment would go the other."

"You mean that in the case of my wishing to marry Miss Grant no arguments would have weight. The question is pre-judged, and sentence is given beforehand."

"Yes, Nigel. Since you put a point-blank question I can only give you a point-blank reply. That is why I beg you, for her sake, to be discreet, more discreet even than there may be need to be."

"And yet, if we knew anything of her family we might find——"

"Why should we know anything of her family? How can they interest us? Phil-lida says, jokingly I suppose, that they are connections by marriage of the Wimpoles.



Let it be so. Nothing is changed thereby. Nothing is rendered thereby one whit less impossible."

"Then your objection to her is personal?"

"My son," said Lady Glenorchie, with a sudden strength of emphasis, letting her embroidery fall into her lap, and betraying more emotion than she had as yet allowed to become visible, "My son, I have no objection to her. Between a young woman of her sphere and me there is no point of contact, and therefore no point of difference. She is doubtless of excellent personal character, and an adornment to her rank in life. I do not know. I have no means of judging. Let us admit everything to which she can have a claim. She still remains a person of another stamp, another order, than ours. Why should we discuss any longer a subject which can have no great interest to either you or me? Phillida and her friend will have left us in a few days' time, and the incident of their visit will soon have been forgotten."

Lomond made no reply. He was debating within himself as to how far a man, situated as he, was free to follow his own wishes, and



how far he had the right to break his mother's heart.

As the two sat thus in silent conflict, each divining what was passing in the other's mind, Botolph Grayburn and Griselda Grant came out in view, passing through the open French window from the library to the lawn.

## IV

Coming from the dim, cool, sombrely-furnished room, Grayburn paused, dazzled a little by the brilliancy of the scene before him. He drew a long breath of pleasure.

"Wait a moment," he said, as Griselda was about to descend from the terrace to the lawn. "Let me look."

Long absence had made the English landscape better than new in Grayburn's eyes. He had come back to it after years of wandering, knowing himself forgotten by friend and family alike. For this he cared but little; it was not of them he had dreamed in his twenty years of self-denial and adventure; it was of the land itself, with its rich, restful beauty, its scent of fruit and flower, and its responsive soil. He was of the type of Englishman who adapts himself easily to a new environment, and yet in it is secretly an exile. From the moment when his regeneration had begun Grayburn had cherished but one hope, to come back to the land from which he had fled, and for which his

heart had never ceased to hunger—to come back rich, respected, able to command esteem. Then he would find himself a refuge which should be his own, to which he could give himself, on which he could spend himself, and from which he could never be bidden to depart. Human love had but a small place in his heart. He loved his country, not as a patriot but as a son; he loved her hills, her streams, her fields, her trees, her embowered lanes, her storied villages, her time-worn churches engirdled by time-worn tombs,—he loved all these with an ardor of longing that had nerved him to effort, sustained him in depression, and had even kept him from returning till his work was done.

“Look,” he said to Griselda. “This is what I have dreamt of for more than twenty years.”

The western sunlight was slanting athwart a glade of pines, turning each trunk to a pillar of bronze. The sheen of the shorn lawn starred with daisies was like that of velvet. Beyond the lawn were flowers. Beyond the flowers the landscape passed into pasture and park, till it ended amid the huge, historic trees of Swinley.

"It is what I have dreamt of," Grayburn repeated. "It is what I have worked for. It is what I shall have."

"It is what you deserve," Griselda said. "It is a reward which there is nothing left but to take."

"Nothing left but to receive—from you."

"I have nothing to give you but gratitude."

"And I ask no more. Gratitude has its dictates, as well as love."

"Yes, but not the same."

"One word more, Griselda," Grayburn said, with a quick change of tone. "Over there sits the man you think you love, on whom you would lavish what you owe to me. Understand that I shall never permit it. Remember that in this situation it is I who am master. Before we join that lady and her son let me make clear to you again that I leave nothing to your choice, that I can break your will more easily than you mine."

"Don't threaten me," the girl said, quietly. "It is not the way; it is not to any menaces that I shall finally submit. But you yourself have advised that at present we say no more. Let us wait. Let us trust not to a conflict of wills, but to a council of hearts."

"I am willing to wait and to trust, Griselda. If I speak strongly it is because this scene puts fire in my blood. Besides, I want to warn you, to keep you from unnecessary pain. I am accustomed to use any means that will secure my ends. I want you to know that in this case I will do so."

"What means?" faltered the girl. For the first time she felt frightened.

"The readiest," he said, as he went down the steps. "Your friends are looking at us. We ought to join them."

## V

As they crossed the lawn, Lomond rose and came to meet them.

"Lord Lomond," said Griselda, "I want to introduce to you my oldest and best friend, Mr. Grayburn."

"Any friend of Miss Grant's is welcome at Lomond Lodge," said the young man, extending his hand, "and especially one who has the good luck to be the best and oldest."

"Oldest, perhaps," rejoined Grayburn, "but as to being best, I begin to be a little in doubt since hearing of the kindness of newer friends."

"I came, I saw, I conquered," said Miss Grant, laughingly.

"And now," said Lord Lomond, "you have only to occupy the territory you have won."

"Have the natives been disarmed?" asked Grayburn.

"Not by any means," Griselda replied.

"Then," said Grayburn, "you must either fight them or run away."

"There is a third course," Lomond suggested.

"Which is——?" Grayburn began.

"To form an offensive and defensive alliance."

They spoke lightly, as though attaching no more than a frivolous interest to their words, and yet they were conscious of an undercurrent of serious intention. During the minute they stood together each of the men attempted to form some slight estimate of the other.

"A gentleman, at least," was Lomond's first thought, as he remarked Grayburn's careful dress and quiet bearing. "Perhaps a gentleman adventurer," he continued, looking a second time into the hard, handsome face, taking note also of the restless steel-blue eyes.

"A feudal lord in a golf suit," was Grayburn's reflection. "Modern good looks and old-fashioned good manners."

"If there is to be any alliance," said Miss Grant, taking Grayburn's arm, "the high powers should proceed to treat together. Come and let me introduce you to Lady Glenorchie."

"Mother," said Lord Lomond, as they

came under the group of pines, "this is Miss Grant's friend, Mr. Grayburn."

As Grayburn bowed Lady Glenorchie smiled with ready welcome. No feeling of her own could make her forget for an instant the hospitality due from a great Scotch lady towards even a passing guest.

"Mr. Grayburn's name," she said, "takes me back at once to my girlhood. I had a friend named Maria Grayburn, dead now many years ago."

"Yes, I remember," said Grayburn promptly, "She married a Colonel Ordway, and died the same year. She was my cousin's daughter."

"Then you are of the Lincolnshire Grayburns, of Grayburn Hall? Won't you sit down?"

She pointed to a chair near her own, and Grayburn took it.

"I am of that family," he said. "But I have been out of England for many years."

Lady Glenorchie looked at him with an interest she did not often show towards a stranger. The thought of a new possibility was forming in her mind. "Is this man to be my ally or hers?" she asked herself. The fact that he was a Grayburn of Lincoln-



shire placed him on the footing of one with whom she could treat as an equal. She had not expected this in one of Miss Grant's friends, and was so impressed by the discovery that she did not observe Lomond and Griselda Grant talking in low and earnest tones imprudently far away.

"You have been in America perhaps?" Lady Glenorchie asked.

"Yes, for more than twenty years."

"That wonderful country, which we Scotch and English are only beginning to understand. For me it is like a new discovery."

"That is quite true," Grayburn said, with some little emphasis. "The parent countries of America, England especially, have never quite taken in the fact that a great new nation, with new ideals, and new national standards, has sprung up almost unobserved. It is not too much to say that America *is* a new discovery to the majority of our countrymen."

"I suppose it is the fact that our ideals are different which makes it so hard for us to find a common point of view. I have met a good many Americans, my son's friends, but they have always seemed so far away from me."

"Is it not, perhaps, that we—I speak as an Englishman—do not admit quite frankly enough the American's right to be different from ourselves? We do so readily in the case of the Frenchman or the Spaniard. We expect him to have another fashion of saying and doing things than ours. When we see it we are interested and amused. The European foreigner is so distant from us that we rather enjoy his point of view from its contrast to our own. The American, on the other hand, is mentally and socially so near us that we refuse to grant him any liberty to be different at all. Because he speaks our language we demand that he shall speak it as we do. Because his habits are so like our own we demand that they shall be exactly the same."

"You mean," said Lady Glenorchie, "that the Englishman enjoys the difference of type abroad, but tolerates only uniformity at home."

"Precisely," said Grayburn, leaning forward in his chair and speaking with warmth. "And he demands, unconsciously perhaps, that the American shall differ as little from himself as the gentleman of Westmoreland from the gentleman of Kent. There is the

cause of whatever social friction may exist between the two. The Englishman of the upper classes acknowledges but one model of an Anglo-Saxon gentleman. When he sees another he resents it."

"And the American?" asked Lady Glenorchie.

"Oh, he is just as bad," Grayburn answered quickly, "just as intolerant. To him the man who speaks English, and who doesn't correspond to some type he has known in New England or New York, in the South or in the West, is little short of a freak of nature."

"And you? What position do you take up?"

"Oh, I am nothing—or both," said Grayburn, smiling. "I have always been an Englishman in America. I suppose I shall always be an American in England."

Lady Glenorchie smiled too as she said:

"Does not that seem rather unfortunate? Is it not best to be either the one or the other?"

"I think not. In the relations between England and America as they now stand there is room for three classes, the positive Englishman, the positive American, and the

transitional person who forms a link between the two. He is the Englishman who lives in America, or the American who lives in England. He understands both, and does something at least to help each to understand the other."

At this moment a servant appeared bringing a light folding table, which he placed before Lady Glenorchie. A second servant bore a large silver tray on which were the materials for making tea.

"I can understand that the class in which you include yourself must be useful in international relations; especially between countries closely and yet distantly related as England and America. I should think, however, that the position would be somewhat unsatisfactory to yourself."

Lady Glenorchie busied herself with the tea-things, and spoke somewhat absent-mindedly. As a matter of fact she was keeping up the conversation only out of courtesy to her guest. Her real interest was bent on discovering whether this man could or could not be useful to her in separating her son from Griselda Grant.

Grayburn himself had divined from the first moment that the mother of his rival

must be his natural ally. He too had been talking for talking's sake. He did not believe that Lady Glenorchie could be ignorant of her son's inclination. He watched for some sign, he listened for some word, which might betray her state of mind. As she finished speaking she turned her head in search of her son. He stood beside some rose-bushes not far away, talking to Griselda. The girl herself was in the act of fastening a pale pink rose in the white lace of her dress.

Grayburn did not fail to note the delicate flush which came into Lady Glenorchie's cheek, nor the slight severity of emphasis with which she spoke to her son.

"Nigel, would you mind calling Phillips for me? He has forgotten something. I think he is in the dining-room."

Lomond and Miss Grant came forward, he going towards the house, she taking a chair by Grayburn's side.

"I am sorry to have taken all Mr. Grayburn's attention," Lady Glenorchie said to the young girl, measuring as she spoke the tea from a silver caddy into a spoon, and from the spoon into a Dresden tea-pot. "I am sure you must have a great deal to say

to each other after so long a separation."

"We have said a good deal already," said Miss Grant lightly, "haven't we, Mr. Grayburn? So much, in fact, that I have already forgotten the greater part of it. That is one of the advantages of an old, old friendship. One can say all sorts of ridiculous things, and know that one isn't taken at one's word."

"Thank you," he said in a low tone, while Lady Glenorchie gave an order to Phillips. "I was sure you did not mean what you said a little while ago."

"Oh, no," she said, with a sudden flush. "You mistake me. I was speaking of you. It is I who forget. It was you who were not in earnest."

She could say no more for the moment, for just then a loud, musical voice called out from the other side of the lawn, with a very distinct enunciation but a marked staccato foreign accent.

"Lady Glenorchie, you must let me paint you altogether like that. Yes, at the little table of tea, which is so English. Rest like that, I pray you, the cup in the hand. It is perfect, perfect. It must be, madame. Your portrait will make me famous."

"I cannot sit for you to-day, Monsieur de Marignan," Lady Glenorchie said, as the artist came forward to join the group, "so please sit down, and try to behave like an Englishman having his tea."

"Tea, madame!" cried the Frenchman, with a graceful gesture of the hand. "Oh, what is tea when one has a pose like that!"

"Don't speak disrespectfully of tea, Monsieur," said Griselda, as she took the cup which Grayburn passed to her. "Tea is the philtre by which the east still maintains its hold upon the west. See, the very vessel from which we drink it is called China."

"And Mademoiselle has the wisdom of east and west combined," said the Frenchman, with a bow.

"And Monsieur de Marignan has that of neither," cried a light, silvery voice, as Lady Phillida Wimpole, who had crossed the lawn unobserved, took her place near Griselda.

Grayburn turned on the new-comer his keen, quickly judging eyes. She was not what he expected; she was evidently no money-hunting dowager, no social harpy. Slender, just above the middle height, with an air of languor, yet exceedingly alert, perfectly dressed, perfectly at ease, perfectly



sure of herself, absolutely simple in manner, with that simplicity which is the result of infinite self-correction, Lady Phillida Wimpole was henceforth in Grayburn's eyes the incarnation of all his ideals of modern womanhood. Her features were small and regular, her head was well-poised, her complexion that of the wild pink rose when it is just passing the very perfection of its beauty. Her chestnut hair growing low on the forehead waved daintily over the whitest of brows. The eyes were gray—not large and soft, but large and earnest, hard according to some, hungry according to others. They were certainly cold as a rule, and critical, but capable of gleams of tenderness which few had seen. At the present moment, with a parasol that suggested a shower of cream-colored lace shading her uncovered head, she looked not more than thirty, though her exact age was given in the Peerage. Beside her, as Grayburn thought, Lady Glenorchie, with her old-world elegance, looked like a fading flower, and Griselda like one which had not yet bloomed. Frank, frivolous and original, was the character Lady Phillida bore in the world; though the few who had penetrated beneath the surface of her life



knew of saving graces rarely to be found elsewhere.

The daughter of a poor earl, she had married a poor admiral, and at twenty-six had become a poor widow. Poor to Lady Phillida meant just sufficient for food and clothing and the maintenance of a modest establishment in Queen's Gate. It was not absolute penury, but it was not all her taste desired; it was not even all, she thought, that her needs required. Having married for love, she had no intention to remarry for money, though she might have done so more than once. She preferred to use her liberty and position for the benefit of others and herself.

It was an open secret that the young and lovely girls, who from time to time rendered more attractive than ever Lady Phillida's small house in Queen's Gate, were not there only for love of the mistress of the mansion. But London is so free, so tolerant, so ready to accept just that which meets the eye, without asking to know more! And as a matter of fact Lady Phillida's plan had worked admirably. At least one great house owed its chief happiness to her, and in more than one minor establishment she held the

place of fairy-godmother. There were those to whom she had given their chance in life, who without her would have had no chance at all. To the young women under her protection her advice was always prudent, practical, and probably wiser than any their own mothers could have given. A marriage of reason but of love was the aim she kept before her for her charges' sake, and she always reached it. Happiness, not ambition, was her goal for them, and so far none had missed it.

"Lady Phillida," said Marignan, hastening to bring her a chair, "Lady Phillida scorns me because she knows I am at her feet. Had I more pride she would have more pity."

"*Phillida Flouts Me*," said Lady Glenorchie, pouring another cup of tea, "is one of our prettiest old English ballads. You should learn it, monsieur."

"I will, madame, I will. She shall hear it under her window in Queen's Gate. Only, alas! I cannot sing."

"Oh, that doesn't matter, monsieur—in England," said Griselda.

Lady Glenorchie flashed a quick glance upon the girl, who met the older woman's gaze quite tranquilly.

"Miss Grant doesn't find us musical

enough?" Lady Glenorchie asked, as though she scented battle.

"Not in England," said the girl. "The true land of song is Scotland."

Lady Glenorchie did not know whether this was meant in sincerity or sarcasm.

"It is the Scotch who feel that," she said proudly.

"Yes," said Griselda, "I am Scotch."

"I thought that in America one's real nationality was lost?"

"I didn't lose mine," said Griselda.

Again there was the flash of glances exchanged between the two. Lady Glenorchie felt vaguely that Griselda was presuming.

"Will you give me a cup of tea, mother?" Lomond asked, coming up just in time to interrupt the struggle of which no one but himself was aware. "And here is Miss Dumbleton," he continued, as a tall, stately girl, blue-eyed, blonde, and proudly gentle in carriage, came from the direction of the tennis court, accompanied by two young men in flannels.

Lomond placed a chair for Miss Dumbleton, and sat down beside her.

Waynflete and Garth, heated and flushed with playing, threw themselves on the grass.

As the group grew larger the conversation became less general. Lady Glenorchie went on with her duties as hostess, but saying little. Lomond and Miss Dumbleton, each with teacup in hand, were in quiet conversation a little apart from the others. Lady Phillida, Miss Grant, and Marignan, talking and laughing a great deal, were a group by themselves. Grayburn sat in silent enjoyment and observation. It was just such a scene as he had always fancied himself coming home to—simple, easy, restful, picturesque. As he watched Lady Glenorchie's white jeweled hands move hither and thither among the silver and porcelain, his thoughts were back in the mining camps of Nevada and Colorado, where so many of his first years of reformation had been passed. He traversed the still harder years of feverish watching at the wheel of fortune in the great cities of the west. He came to the last years of all, to days spent half in calculation and half in counting upon chance, to nights of broken sleep, to an almost hourly waiting upon the caprices of the stock-exchanges of Chicago and New York, which could give him all or take all away. Now, he reflected with satisfaction, that life was over. It had

given him excitement, but no joy. One more struggle, and then his whole desire would be gratified.

As he idly watched the silent servants come and go, as he heard without heeding the laughter and conversation round him, as his eye wandered over the rich, well-ordered landscape of garden and park, "All this," he said, "shall be mine."

## VI

The sunlight slanted more and more across the glade of pines. The little group broke up. Miss Dumbleton and Lady Phillida went away arm in arm, followed by Garth and Waynflete. Lomond and Marignan were in the billiard-room. Miss Grant withdrew to her own apartment. Only Lady Glenorchie and Grayburn were left in the shady corner of the lawn.

Each had waited for this opportunity of quiet talk. Each had begun to feel confident of the other.

"You will come back and dine with us, I hope," Lady Glenorchie said, when they were quite alone.

"Thank you," said Grayburn, taking a chair nearer hers. "I should like to do so, if it is not too great a tax upon your kindness."

"Do so, please," said Lady Glenorchie, taking up from the table by her side the work she had laid down before tea. "We dine

at eight. My son will be glad to see you, and of course you want to be as much as possible with your friend."

"My ward," Grayburn corrected. "I have been Miss Grant's guardian since her infancy."

"I fancied she was an orphan, though I didn't know."

"I think you had not met her before she came down here."

"No. Miss Grant is with us as Lady Phillida Wimpole's friend."

"It has been a great advantage to her to have had Lady Phillida's protection. I doubted it at first, but I can understand it now."

"Since you have seen Lady Phillida herself. Yes, she is a beautiful woman, and one of my dearest friends. I should have doubted, however, if the life she leads would have been exactly that in which you would have had your ward presented."

"It is not," said Grayburn frankly. "Miss Grant acted in the matter without my advice. But the thing being done, I can see that it is not all wrong. I have wanted my ward to have all possible social advantages."

"One can see that she has had them. It

must have been a difficult task for a man. But perhaps you are married?"

"No; I am not married."

"Then your ward has been indeed fortunate in falling into such excellent hands. Nothing could be more perfect than her general style and bearing. Monsieur de Marignan assures us, too, that she speaks French like a Frenchwoman. She certainly dresses like one."

"You like her, then?"

The suddenness of the inquiry startled Lady Glenorchie, whose intention was to ask questions rather than to answer them. Her diplomatic usage was to cover hesitation with an increased kindliness.

"Your directness frightens me," she said, with a smile.

"I have never found that uncertainty of aim helped me to hit the mark."

"You prefer to go straight to the point."

"When there is one I want to reach."

"Which is the case here?"

"Which is the case in general."

"But here in particular, I think."

"You, too, are direct, Lady Glenorchie."

"I can see you are a frank man; I suppose I am a frank woman."



"Mine is the brutal directness which must fight to win; yours the open serenity which has never feared to lose."

"Mine," said Lady Glenorchie, less to her hearer than to her own protesting conscience; "Mine is only the straight-forward intention to do my duty."

"And mine," said Grayburn, reckless of conscience and hearer alike; "Mine is only the outspoken determination to succeed."

"There have always been many roads to Rome."

"And equally good as long as they lead to the Golden Milestone in the Forum."

"I do not admit that. I say only that people may be guided by wholly different motives and yet reach the same spot."

"Which means that you and I could talk together on a certain subject without fear of giving or taking offence. Am I right?"

"Quite so," said Lady Glenorchie, letting her work fall into her lap, and looking him straight in the eyes. "You and I are strangers to each other, but we have met at a point where our interests touch. You as the guardian of your ward, and I as the mother of my son, must have matters to discuss

together. Miss Grant has perhaps already——”

“Yes; she has told me that your son wants to marry her.”

This was more than Lady Glenorchie knew, but she did not think it necessary to avow the fact.

“And you, as a Grayburn and a man of the world, can understand that I——”

“Perfectly—from your point of view. But I must tell you from the outset that it is not mine.”

“Then, I fear, my cause is in danger of being lost.”

“Not necessarily. If I cannot fight with you I am not obliged to fight against you.”

“I am not sure that I understand.”

“I mean that it is rare to find two persons who are wholly agreed. Husband and wife, however happily living together, often have quite different aims. In this case there are four of us, and each has his or her own motive and point of view. No two of us are working quite together. Your son is going his way, my ward is going hers; you are going your way and I am going mine. I repeat that I cannot fight with you; but I might help you to powder and shot.”

"You mystify me," said Lady Glenorchie, helplessly, "and mystery is precisely what I want to avoid. There is so much of it about Miss Grant. Can you not at least tell me who she is? Even that would be a help to me. I have tried to question her courteously, but her answers are either vague or evasive."

"I can tell you many things, Lady Glenorchie. But I have already given you to understand that your objects are not mine. If you choose to ask me questions I will answer them; and yet I tell you in advance that I will do so in a way to suit my own purposes not to further yours."

Lady Glenorchie was silent for a moment. She did not like the situation into which she was being drawn. She had a high sense of honor, and she feared that her present action might not be honorable.

"And yet," she said to herself. "I must save my son. I don't blame him for loving her; there is in her much to love. But he cannot marry her. I must keep him from that even if my conscience reproves the means—but my conscience does not reprove me," she protested proudly. "I am doing right. I am acting wisely towards them both."

"Then who is this lady?" she asked aloud, with the emphasis of exasperation.

Grayburn moved his chair a little nearer hers and spoke in a lower voice.

"It will hardly surprise you," he said, "to learn that she has been commonly called my own illegitimate daughter."

The effect of these words on Lady Glenorchie was that which Grayburn had hoped to produce.

Her color rose, not to a blush, but to a pale point of pink on each delicate white cheek. Her eyes flashed and her lips trembled.

"And this person has been permitted——" she began, in indignation.

"I was going on to tell you," said Grayburn, calmly, "that the report was ridiculously untrue. Had it not been so absurd I should not have mentioned it to your ladyship."

"Then, may I ask who her father was?"

"A Scotchman. A man of good family."

"Oh," said Lady Glenorchie, with deepened interest. "There are the Grants of Grantown. It could not have been——"

"No," Grayburn said, speaking very dis-

tinctly and significantly. "My ward has never borne her father's name."

"Her mother's, then?"

"Her mother's."

"Which means that after all——"

"Your ladyship must guess the rest."

There was a long silence, during which the pink spot on Lady Glenorchie's cheek burned into red. She was but slowly seizing the significance of Grayburn's words. Never had anything so much like shame been brought so near her.

"And the mother?" she asked, breaking the long pause. "Who was she?"

"A maidservant in a village inn. Her name, too, was Griselda Grant."

"And the father is——?"

"Dead. He was hanged in America."

The spot of color in Lady Glenorchie's cheek went out like an extinguished light. She grew very pale.

"O my God," she murmured, so low that Grayburn did not hear her, "this is too much! My son shall never come to it."

"But her wealth?" she asked aloud, making a strong effort after self-control. "She is rich. Where do her means come from?"

"She herself best knows that," said Grayburn, with a shrug of the shoulders.

Lady Glenorchie rose.

"Tell me no more."

"I have told you very little of all there is to tell," said Grayburn, rising also.

"And yet too much."

To calm her agitation Lady Glenorchie began to walk. Grayburn paced beside her.

"There are other circumstances——" he began.

"None that I wish to know."

"And yet some day you may think that I have deceived you. You may judge me harshly——"

"I shall never judge you at all. When I have saved my son——"

"You will fling the instrument away."

"I shall always be grateful to you. Whatever your motives may be you have done more for me and my house than I can ever thank you for."

"Don't thank me. I have been working not for you but for myself."

"If your object has been to prevent a marriage between your ward and my son, be sure that you have succeeded. To-morrow he shall know all that I know."

"And you think that he——"

"I do not think—I know."

"That he would give her up?"

"That he would break his heart—that he would break mine and hers, before he would bring a stain upon his family's honor."

"Then you believe that the family's honor would be dearer to him than his own?"

Lady Glenorchie winced, but held her ground.

"We will let that pass," she said, haughtily. "You will pardon me if I say that this is something which you cannot understand. You are not the head of a great house——"

"I mean to be."

"You have no sacred traditions to treasure and transmit."

"I shall create them."

"In any case," she went on, ignoring his remarks, "I beg you to believe that my son's personal honor is safe with him. He may suffer; your ward may suffer too——"

"But better that they should do so than either you or I."

"I do not know whether that is meant for cynicism or cruelty."

"For neither. It is one's natural attitude towards life."

"It is not mine," she protested, as she turned at the end of the lawn.

"That means only that your ladyship is the exception to the rule."

"I want my son to be happy, and I wish no ill to Miss Grant. Their own interests can be served best in keeping them apart."

"Towards that I shall do my utmost. Tomorrow my ward returns with me to London."

"After what we have said it would be insincerity on my part to beg her to remain."

"Hereafter she shall be under no protection but my own."

"It is needless to say that I think you are wise."

"In the meantime it is best, perhaps, that no abrupt measures should be taken."

"There I entirely agree with you. My son is of an ardent, not to say romantic, nature. He has much of the old Scotch impulsiveness. He must be dealt with gently. If he thought we meant to cross him I should not answer for the consequences. He would dare anything for the moment, even though he were to regret it afterwards."

She paused near one of the entries to the house.



"Then," said Grayburn, "with your permission I shall come to dinner, and my ward will stay to-night. Her going away to-morrow will then take place in a manner to cause no remark."

"And when she has gone I shall tell my son what I have learned from you. I shall treat it as a confidence towards every one else, but I must let him know."

"I am sure I can trust to your ladyship's discretion."

"And I to yours."

"And you to mine."

"We shall see you, then, this evening," she said, in the tone of a royal person bringing an interview to an end.

"It will give me great pleasure," he said, with a bow.

Lady Glenorchie acknowledged the salute with a slight inclination of the head.

Grayburn looked after the fragile, queenly woman as she went up the steps and entered the house.

"Your ladyship, too," he said to himself, with a little silent laugh, "would try her hand at the game of life. But only the experienced player wins."

Lady Glenorchie passed through the

library into the great hall, and then up the white marble stairway. She carried herself like Catherine of Arragon sweeping out of the court against whose jurisdiction she protested. For Lady Glenorchie was being tried by a judge who had taken the side against her. She already knew herself accused.

"Better that they should suffer than you or I! Is that your argument?" demanded sternly the Voice which haled her before its own tribunal.

"I never said so," she made silent answer. "It was he. I do not flee from suffering; I shrink only from dishonor."

"*You* talk of dishonor," pursued the inexorable Voice. "Is it no dishonor to plot——?"

"I have not plotted," she asserted wildly. "It is false. I could not so demean myself."

"To plot," the Voice went on, "the ruin of a young girl's name, and her degradation in the eyes of the man who loves her."

"He is my son. I must save him."

"You are doing wrong. You are doing wrong. You are doing wrong."

"No, no, no. It is right. I will do it. I

am his mother. I must know. I will do it. I will do it."

"You are doing wrong. You are doing wrong. You are doing wrong," the Voice continued, like the tolling of a bell, the sound of which grew fainter and fainter as Lady Glenorchie muffled her ears and fled.

## VII

The billiard-room at Lomond Lodge was a large, square hall, used as the entrance to the northern portion of the house. In the centre was the green-covered table, while along the walls were divans and arm-chairs. The walls themselves were adorned with antique arms symmetrically arranged. The effect was somewhat gloomy, the room being lighted only from the northern embrasure, where there was one large window of Tudor Gothic style. The arms of the family of Tulloch emblazoned in the upper panes gave a touch of gorgeous color to an apartment which would otherwise have been sombre.

In the embrasure was a soft and tempting window-seat, where Lomond and Marignan, lounging together, were idly watching the setting sun touch with its horizontal rays the distant trees of Windsor Forest. They had put away their cues, and had begun to smoke.

Paul de Marignan was the man whom Lomond loved and respected more than any

other. Nowhere could Marignan have been taken for anything but a Frenchman. His regular features, his soft brown eyes, his black, pointed beard, his carefully curved moustache, were all as foreign as his vivacity, and as his accent in speaking English. Of unusual height, of gigantic strength, he was also strikingly handsome. He was conscious of this, and yet was not vain.

Always successful, he had one of those natures which success does not spoil. From the day when he had won the Prix de Rome he had never known anything of the hardships of struggle, or of the bitterness of failure. He had gained his triumphs easily; and perhaps for that very reason had never lost the simplicity of character and the sweetness of temper which had come with him into the world. Affectionate, and not afraid of seeming so, he won affection in return. An enthusiastic admirer of the art of others, he disarmed jealousy towards his own. Always in sympathy with youth, always open to suggestion, he retained at five and forty the buoyancy of twenty-five.

Marignan's fame as a portrait painter had been steadily growing during the last ten years. In a certain combination of realism

with idealism he now stood without a rival in Europe. To this success his own native goodness contributed more, perhaps, than his technique or his eye for color and pose. He was a painter of character; he made his subjects live; they not only appealed to the eye, but they haunted the memory. In the face that looked out from one of Marignan's canvases the spectator felt there was a soul; in that soul he saw noble possibilities.

"Can that be the frivolous, reckless, worldly Madame de Bresle?" had been asked at the Salon, "that woman whose mouth is all intensity, and whose eyes are the expression of exalted aspiration?"

It was because Marignan had set forth his subject's character not wholly as it was, but as it was struggling to be; not as it was seen by the world, but as it was known to him. Here was the secret of his power. He believed in men and women; he took them at their best and gave them in like manner. The foolish woman was set forth in her affection, the swaggering youth in his courage, the cynical old man in his hidden, unsuspected kindness. It was not flattery; it was truth—truth which often surprised,

and more often shamed, the person of whom it was told.

"It is not myself, it is what I ought to be," was a remark not seldom made.

"It is what I want to become," was generally a subsequent reflection.

"I paint you as I know you to be," Marignan had often said to Lomond.

This was at the beginning of their acquaintance three years ago.

At that time Marignan had just held his first exhibition in London. His fame had come before him, and his recognition followed after. His work, which was neither daring, glaring, nor guilty of violent straining to catch the eye, appealed to what was most serious and elevated in the English taste. His men and women seemed in the beholder's imagination, to take their place at once in the long procession of noble knights and dames with which Titian, Van Dyke, Reynolds, and Gainsborough have enriched the world.

Lady Glenorchie, herself a connoisseur, had made a special journey to town to see the collection. She then begged Marignan to paint her son in Highland dress. The result was the life-sized portrait which the

Parisians called "Le bel Ecossais," the most impressive picture in the Salon of the following year.

After a first disappointment Lady Glenorchie had come to love this portrait above everything else that she possessed. It had been meant for Glenorchie Castle, but she had kept it near her at Rusthall Court, and had recently removed it to Lomond Lodge. Here, from its position at the branching of the white marble staircase in the great hall, it seemed to preside over the ten generations of the house of Tulloch, whose representatives, beginning with Kenneth, Earl of Lomond, painted by Holbein, lined the walls.

It is true that her son's portrait was not what Lady Glenorchie had expected. She had had in mind a vision of a proud Highland chief, a mingling of Ossian, Prince Charlie, and Rob Roy. Lomond, on the other hand, had pictured himself with the air of a young Scotch Londoner, at a Royal Caledonian ball. At first neither he nor his mother was quite satisfied, though they both came to see their mistake.

"Le bel Ecossais" was a tall, firmly-built young man crossing an upland moor, the



heather of which formed the reddish purple background. A collie lay panting at his master's feet, and another bounded after a bird. The young laird's pose was absolutely simple; he had paused in his walk, and, leaning on the stout stick he carried, was looking towards the spectator. The narrow turrets of Glenorchie Castle were just visible in the distance. Lomond had pleaded for a gun as a detail to go with the bird and the dog, but Marignan had been inexorable.

"It would make my portrait," he said, "like any of the grouse-shooting, deer-stalking pictures, of which you have so many in your Royal Academy. Here you are the Scotch lord of the times of peace, walking over his own lands, breathing the air of the mountains, and crushing the heather all the Scotchmen love. I give you no gun; I give you no wild servants with sandwiches and whisky. I paint you as I know you to be. Every one who sees you will say, 'This is Nigel Graham. This is his self and soul.' "

And every one who saw this portrait said so. Instinctively the eye turned away from the marvelously painted details—from the upland landscape, from the dog panting in

the heather, from the picturesque Highland costume—and fixed itself on the face which turned its gaze toward you. It was more than the Lomond you knew; it was the Lomond you divined. It was more than a handsome, blue-eyed, blond young man; it was a strong, modest, loyal nature. It was a face to honor, admire, and love. One felt in it the presence not of a great intellect, but of a great heart. The features were not without their touch of pride, but a pride tempered with tenderness. The forehead, under the jauntily-set Scotch bonnet, was broad and white, and the fair hair showed about the temples; the blue eyes were grave; the nostrils sensitive and finely cut; the mouth, beneath the long, fair moustache, was firm; the chin strong, and dented by a slightly showing dimple. It was the face of a good fighter, but a faithful friend. It might lack originality; but it was wanting in nothing that belongs to courage and uprightness, honor and love. The brush of the artist showed at a glance what could only have been learned otherwise in years of friendship.

First, in the painting of this picture, afterwards in visits made by Lomond to Paris,

and seasons spent by Marignan in England, the acquaintance between the two men gave place to intimacy. Now, in spite of the fifteen years of difference in age, there was little that concerned the one into which the other did not enter. On Marignan's part this regard was deeper than Lomond was aware of; it was more than friendship; it was a deeply-rooted affection. Among the painter's most sacred possessions, which he carried with him everywhere, was a simple photograph of "Le bel Ecossais," under which was written the line from the Vulgate, *Intuitus eum, dilexit eum*—words which had often floated through Marignan's memory in the days when the young man had sat hour after hour before him, and the portrait had taken form.

During the present visit to Lomond Lodge, Marignan had not been blind to the silent drama which was being played beneath his eyes. He was too close an observer not to have remarked the position in which Lomond, his mother, and Griselda stood towards each other.

"I know what is the matter," he said suddenly, after a long silence, as the two sat smoking in the large embrasure.

"With whom?" Lomond asked, turning to look his friend in the face.

"With you," Marignan answered. "With you and Madame de Glenorchie and—and some one else."

"Perhaps I do not understand," said Lomond, who wished to speak frankly, but dreaded making confidences.

"But I do," said Marignan, putting down his cigarette, and laying his hand lightly on Lomond's knee. "I do understand. I see. I know."

"You know what?"

"That you have come to the point which a man reaches only once in his lifetime. Do not be angry, *mon petit*. Let me give you my counsels as I would take yours."

"Parles, mon ami," said Lomond, gently, speaking in French in order to use the familiar and affectionate *tu*. "Dis-moi tout ce que tu veux."

"I will," said Marignan. "It is the part of a friend that I play. I see you hesitate; I see you suffer; I see others suffer. I must speak. For the first time you love. Is it not true?"

Lomond drew a hard breath.

"Yes," he said, in a voice scarcely audible.

"And she loves you."

"I don't know."

"I know. I have seen that too. Many times I have wished to paint her with that expression in her face. Oh, she did not know that I regarded her. But I am like a robber; I steal the secrets that one would keep hidden from all the world. My eye is habituated to observe, and I am sure the day has come for you both. Madame de Glenorchie, she knows it too."

There was another pause.

"What then?" Lomond asked. "What are your counsels?"

"Perhaps I was wrong to speak of counsels," Marignan went on. "Perhaps I have none to give. I know but one thing. I will tell it you. The best thing in life is love. It is more than the best, it is the most essential. It is to life what health is to the body, what beauty is to art, what the voice is to song. There are many kinds of love, and there are many kinds of people. Some content themselves with one kind, and some with another. Some can love many times, and some but once. And you are like the last; and she is like the last. I study faces; I study souls. I see that in you both.

"What would you do, then?" Lomond asked.

"I would seize quickly the one chance life means to offer me, before it is taken back. You are not a boy to love a few days, and then to change. You know you will never change. She too will never change. It is the fatal moment for each of you. I see. I know. Why should you be unhappy, when life holds for you such joy?"

"But my mother? She would never consent. It would kill her."

"Some one must suffer. It is better that it should be one person and not three."

"But I owe her so much."

"Less in this matter than she owes you. Besides, nothing can prevent her suffering. When she sees that you have renounced your love for her, can she be happy? No, *mon petit*, never. It is not in a mother to build her happiness on her son's lifelong sorrow. In the end it will cost her less to accept your decision than to make you bow to hers."

"I wish I could think so. But if she should refuse to build her happiness on my suffering, why should I build mine on hers?"

"Listen to what I will tell you. You will

see that when a man misses his one chance of love it never comes again. There is a little story in my life. No one knows it now but me. To no one would I tell it but to you. You have heard of the Vicomtesse de Prégny? Yes, the original of the beautiful portrait in the Luxembourg. That picture keeps her name alive, but she herself is forgotten. I alone remember. I will never forget."

There was a pause. Marignan, turning away, looked for a few moments towards the distant forest.

"The Vicomtesse de Prégny," he went on at last, "was Jeanne de la Kérouaille, of a great family in Brittany. She had but lately left the convent when a marriage was arranged for her with my best friend, Henri de Prégny. Henri and I had been like brothers, and so the Marquise de la Kérouaille invited me to pass some days with him at the Breton château. It was but a month before the marriage. Mademoiselle de la Kérouaille had seen Henri but a few times. She did not know him. She did not love him. She was twenty; I was twenty-eight. You know what I mean to tell you?"

"I can guess," said Lomond.



"It came quickly—love. I was but a few days there when we understood—each of us. I need not say she was beautiful. You have seen her portrait. Yes, she was calm like that; even as a young girl she had that noble air, that something pure and exalted which few women have. We were never alone together—not then. It is not possible in France. It is not as it is in England. We talked only before all the world, but we spoke frankly and heart to heart. We agreed that she must go on, that she must marry Henri and obey her parents. Nothing else seemed possible. We thought it our duty to renounce each other, to suffer rather than make others suffer. And it was all so useless! We learned that when it was too late. We saved nobody, and we destroyed ourselves."

Marignan spoke rapidly, almost passionately, with gestures of pleading and persuasion. He was not making a confidence, he was only citing an example.

"After the marriage they came to live in Paris—naturally. We could not but meet. We met often, always. At first we tried to ignore what we had said in Brittany, to forget, to be friends and no more. But it was



not possible. You understand that. Two years went by, years of martyrdom on both sides. I left Paris twice, but I could not stay away. The worst was that we had spoiled our lives for nothing. Henri was proud of her; he did not love her—no, never. He did not care that she had no love for him. We made a mistake from the beginning. Had she refused to marry him there would have been trouble, but it would have passed. Her parents would have been angry, and Henri wounded in his pride; no more than that. But now there was no escape, no refuge, no hope. At last it could not be longer borne. She left Paris; she went to Prégny, not to return. I never saw her any more.”

“And now?” Lomond asked, softly.

“She is dead. Five years ago she was a widow. I wrote, praying her to let me come to her. But it was always too late. She was already suffering from her last malady. They told me she had much changed, that she had lost all her beauty. She would not that I who had known her as you see her in the Luxembourg should see her as she was. And so she died. It was too late. But it was my one time in life, my only time. It

was a great mistake; but when I would not seize the golden cup it passed me by. Since then all women to me are the same. I love none. I have no more love. It is all given. I have had a good life. I have gained much success, and a little honor. But it is like the beautiful setting out of which the jewel has been lost. And I would not, *mon petit*, that you should lose it too. That is why I speak and tell you this old history. It is to save you from mistake. Madame de Glenorchie will suffer whichever thing you do. And she needs to suffer; she is too hard, too proud; it will be better in the end. But the struggle caused by giving you your happiness will be easier to bear than her terrible remorse in taking it away."

When Marignan ceased they sat a long time in silence. Then Lomond rose and laid his hand gently on his friend's shoulder.

"Thank you, dear old fellow," he said, looking down into the painter's soft brown eyes. His own eyes were moist, and there was a tremor in his voice. "Thank you for telling me all this. I expect it has been pretty hard, but with me it will be sacred."

"My mistake will have been partly redeemed," said Marignan, as he looked up

into the young Scotchman's grave, pale face, "when it has prevented yours."

"I will try to make none," said Lomond, as he turned away. "I am resolved. And thank you once again."

Marignan watched him as he crossed the large hall, in which it had now grown almost dark.

"*Intuitus eum, dilexit eum,*" he murmured, under his breath, and sighed.

Then he turned to watch the last lilac-tinted sunset glow fade out of the western sky.

## VIII

Griselda Grant, on leaving the lawn after tea, bore herself steadily till the door of her room was closed and locked. Then she threw herself face downwards on a couch and sobbed. While the eyes of others were upon her she had nerved herself to be calm, to look as though nothing unusual were happening, to speak as though the conversation of the moment were her only thought. Now she could bear up no longer.

She felt very lonely. There had been many moments in her life when she had realized the bitterness of being fatherless and motherless; but Grayburn had been always there as a protecting power, and she could turn to him. Now even he had failed her. She had reached a point where her natural self-reliance seemed insufficient. She longed for some one to show her the way, and there was no one in whose counsel or affection she could take refuge. She must fight her battle and decide her course alone; and for the moment the necessity

seemed hard. And yet, even amid her sobs, she did not doubt her own ability to do so. She was disappointed and unnerved, but not in despair. A new set of circumstances must be faced, and she was tired and heart-sore; but she knew that her strength would be equal to all demands, and that she should find her way. She wept from loneliness, but not from fear.

All through her life she had been accustomed to depend upon herself. Her earliest recollections were of an elderly Scotch lady with whom she had lived in a somewhat stately, old-fashioned house on the Massachusetts coast, near Boston. In summer they had neighbors, but in winter they had none. Summer and winter, however, Griselda and Mrs. Macleod lived quite alone. Mr. Macleod was always wandering in the West with Grayburn, seeking fortune, and apparently finding it, for there was no lack of money in the lonely Massachusetts home. All was maintained there on a dignified footing. There were servants, carriages, horses, and everything else that a woman and child could need for comfort.

The girl, however, felt no dependence on her elderly companion. She had had from

the beginning an instinctive sense that the modest establishment was maintained chiefly on her account, and Mrs. Macleod had never attempted to give any other impression. Between the two there was affection, but no sympathy; and as Griselda grew they drifted more and more apart.

The tall, thin, puritanical Scotchwoman was narrow in nature and intelligence. She had accepted the care of Griselda not as a pleasure but as a task. She obeyed her husband, and he obeyed Grayburn. For her the girl was never anything more than a child of unfortunate birth whom Grayburn, for reasons best known to himself, was bringing up as though she were his own. Inwardly the woman protested against the simple luxury with which her charge was surrounded. That Griselda should have governesses and masters seemed to Mrs. Macleod little short of a scandal, when so many children born in lawful wedlock must go untaught. It was to the woman's credit, however, that she never allowed this feeling to become evident in act or word; and her treatment of Griselda was always grimly kind. On one point only had Mrs. Macleod expressed her own desire. She had chosen

the solitary house on the Atlantic seaboard because the situation recalled her native place in the Isle of Skye. All that a large city had to give could be brought to them there, while they themselves could remain unnoticed and apart.

So Griselda grew, with no companions, but needing none. From time to time, in summer, advances were made to her by the daughters of families whose seaside houses were on that coast; but the acquaintances thus made never developed into intimacy. The very rumors that were afloat regarding Griselda's birth were enough, in the minds of respectable parents, to place the girl outside the sphere of free and easy friendship.

On her part Griselda, though often lonely, was neither unhappy nor impatient. Practical rather than imaginative, she never lost the consciousness that her present form of life, though it lasted for fifteen years, was not to go on always. It was a time of waiting and preparation, though for what she did not know. With a mind both quick and retentive, she read and reflected much, bringing to bear upon her studies less of sentiment than of simple common sense. She was proud and easily wounded, but reasonable

and just. Rarely angry, and never so without cause, she could be passionately indignant, and even unforgiving. Her idea of life, from childhood, had been that of a course, difficult but not appalling, in which she should be obliged to walk more or less alone. She accepted this fact without dismay convinced that the way would be made clear as she went on. To courage and common sense she added much deep, if undemonstrative, religious feeling; so that if she ever had a moment of dejection she felt herself supported by the never-distant Love.

What she knew of her own origin increased perhaps this sense of isolation from the ordinary world. There had never been any secret as to her relationship to Grayburn. Little by little, as she grew older, she learned the circumstances of her birth, as far as her guardian thought fit to make them known. The full truth he had reserved until she was twenty-one.

The information she had thus acquired served only to heighten her affection for the man who had rescued her in babyhood, and who had cared for her incessantly throughout her life. Grayburn was the one truly great figure of her world. His comings



and goings divided her year better than did the seasons. He was to her the incarnation of all that was noble and good. His absences were long periods of waiting for his return. She could not know him very well, and she saw him only at his best; for his visits though frequent were brief, and rather for the purpose of seeing that all went well, than for any pleasure they gave himself.

Now and then, during the hottest part of the summer, he would stay for a few weeks at a time, and these were Griselda's seasons of great happiness. She and Grayburn read and rode and walked and talked together. It mattered little to her that he was a silent and pre-occupied companion; he was there, and that was enough; whatever was lacking on his part she herself supplied. She never observed that though kind he was not tender; that he never expressed regret at going away or seemed to miss her when he was gone. She took his goodness for granted, and never doubted his affection.

When Griselda was seventeen this quiet life came suddenly to an end. Grayburn wrote that business was taking him to Paris and that he wished her to come with him. He explained that he would leave her there

for a time, and gave her ten days in which to make her preparations. Within a month Griselda found herself transplanted from the Massachusetts coast to the quaint and courtly town of St. Germain-en-Laye. It was a new atmosphere, and yet a life which in its seclusion was not wholly unlike the old.

After a few days spent in Paris, in which Grayburn was always occupied, he had taken her to St. Germain, and had left her with the Baronne de St. Caste. He himself went on to Vienna, and afterwards to Berlin. Before returning to America he paid his ward a two-days' visit, and then was gone.

This sudden change was the first trial of Griselda's life. She met it bravely, knowing that this too was a period of preparation. It was autumn, and as she walked with Madame de St. Caste along the historic terrace or under the yellowing chestnuts, she longed with a great homesickness for the flaming colors of the Massachusetts woods, and for the purple autumn daisies and yellow golden-rod along the dusty roadsides. As she looked away over the great green plain, through which the Seine twisted and twined like a long silver serpent, to where

Paris lay just visible, the Eiffel Tower faintly etched against the sky, she often sighed for a sight of Egg Rock, lying lone in the Atlantic, or for one glimpse of the long low line of old Nahant.

But time and use have easy tasks at seventeen, and Griselda came to care for her new surroundings. She adapted herself to the stately, sombre elegance of the old *hôtel* in the Rue du Vieil Abreuvoir, and had a quick perception of the mingled dignity and good taste so characteristic of certain phases of French life. In Madame de St. Caste she found a friend, gentle and sympathetic if not amusing: and Griselda greatly enjoyed the instruction in music, embroidery, household economy, and French literature which she took under this lady's wise direction.

The daughter of a family of Napoleonic traditions, and the widow of a gallant officer killed at Sedan, Madame de St. Caste assumed towards the Republic the same attitude of proud aloofness which the members of the old nobility had maintained towards the Second Empire. Tall, slender, graceful, very pale, with large, sad eyes, she seemed in her long, black, trailing robes like the very personification of France brooding

over her reverses. She herself was conscious of this, and was proud of looking out on life much as the statue of Strasburg surrounded by patriotic wreaths and mottoes might be supposed to gaze on the gaieties of the Place de la Concorde. Madame de St. Caste had never advanced beyond 1870. The loss of Alsace and Lorraine was as bitter a blow to her as though it had fallen yesterday. As Griselda bent over her embroidery frame, in the faded salon, or paced the leafy *allées* of the park, she heard endless tales of Bismarck and Benedetti, of what the Emperor had said, and of what the Empress had worn. The Baronne's lightest memories were of balls at the Tuileries or *fêtes* at Compiègne. Her husband, who had been a brave and handsome man, held a secondary place in his widow's recollection. France and the fashions, as they had been before the war, were the favorite themes of Madame's subdued and sorrowing conversation.

The Baronne still received on Saturdays, and then her *salon* was frequented by survivors like herself; politicians who had long been forgotten, artists who had lost their vogue, with a few old military men who at

eighty were still declaring their determination never to fight for the republic. Now and then, when more intimate friends came out from Paris, there was a little *déjeuner* that was almost gay, at the Pavillon Henri IV.

In all this Griselda took her part, till she became mildly imperialistic herself. But when the three years of this life were over she had gained something more than a knowledge of Second Empire politics; she had attained the object Grayburn sought, and for which he had willingly doubled the Baronne's modest income. When Griselda returned to America those who had known her were at once conscious of the change in her. Just what it was no one could define, but every one could see. It was more than the difference between seventeen and twenty; it was less in acquired knowledge than in unconscious charm. Griselda had inherited a certain Scotch dignity; she had grown up to American ease; she had added to these something of French graciousness—that tinge of sympathy, that touch of taste, light, unlabored, indefinable, intuitive only and never to be taught, which mark the Frenchwoman of the highest class in the smallest

details of speech and dress, of air and gesture. In a court whose very password was brilliancy, in a time which placed almost too high an appreciation upon elegance, Madame de St. Caste had been noted for distinction of manners and simplicity of grace. Something of these Griselda had acquired, not by effort but by instinct, grafting them on to her Scottish strength of character and straightforward New England training.

Griselda as she was at twenty seemed to Grayburn to promise all that he needed to perfect his success. He was already wealthy; and he had so managed her originally small fortune that now she too was rich. On the day she became of age her entire income was placed at her disposal. On the same day he told her all that there was still to tell of the circumstances of her birth.

Her life had been so different from the lives of other girls that Griselda scarcely felt surprise at the new facts which she now learned. She listened in silence while Grayburn unfolded his plans, and made scarcely any comment when he ceased. The knowledge of her complete independence in age and income increased her natural instinct to act warily. She loved her guardian, and

wished to please him, but she would not commit herself to his plans by promise. She did not protest, she raised no objection; she simply remained silent. She must think, she must wait, before deciding whether she could act with him or not.

To Grayburn this silence meant submission. She had never questioned his wishes in the past; and it did not occur to him that she would do it now. She had done what he thought best; and this absence of comment meant that she would do it still.

On one point only Griselda had expressed herself as wholly of his opinion. The Macleods were returning to Scotland to enjoy their hardly-earned wealth. Grayburn suggested that Griselda should go with them, he himself following when some last business affairs would let him. To this the girl consented. If what Grayburn wished were to come to pass, then she must first survey the ground, she must see whither she would be going before taking the first step; for the first step would be the fatal one.

It had never been her intention to remain with her elderly Scotch companions, though she had not said so to Grayburn. They were not what she needed, they could give



her no help, and they were not even personally attached to her. On reaching London her first use of her independence was to take the simplest and readiest means of putting herself under more useful and sympathetic protection. This had come about through Lady Phillida's advertisement. Griselda was not unaware that behind such a paragraph there might easily be fraud or bad faith; but if so, she did not doubt her ability to deal with it. She would test the matter and see.

The first meeting with Lady Phillida Griselda felt to be a turning point in her life. She had a sense of crossing the threshold of another world. The interview took place in Lady Phillida's drawing-room in Queen's Gate, whither Griselda had come by appointment. The letters which had passed between the two had been absolutely non-committal on both sides, and Griselda had already decided her method of courteous retreat in case of dissatisfaction with what she found.

As she alighted at the door her quick, practical eye took in every detail. The exterior of the house with its window boxes of flowers, and curtains of rich guipure behind them, showed signs of taste and care. She



remarked the footman who admitted her, and the hall with its carved furniture and old prints. During the two minutes of waiting in the drawing-room she received a distinct if vague impression of beauty, comfort, and well-ordered ease. When a portière was lifted and Lady Phillida, wearing a long, loose morning-robe of pink and white, came briskly in, Griselda thought for a second that there must be some mistake.

Lady Phillida shook hands cordially, and apologized for being late. The apparent absence of any embarrassment on her part put Griselda entirely at ease. When they sat down the conversation for a few moments consisted of such commonplace remarks as two acquaintances might exchange during an ordinary call. But these moments were decisive; for it was then that each of the two women examined, criticised, and summed up the other. No detail on either side of voice, feature, manner, or dress escaped quick and comprehensive scrutiny.

As Lady Phillida was saying aloud that one must be very careful in one's choice of a hansom in the street, she was secretly remarking that the simplicity of Griselda's dark blue gown was that which only taste

and money can achieve, and wondering whether it was American or French. Griselda, in saying that for some purposes she preferred a hansom to a brougham, was noting that Lady Phillida was really older than she seemed at a passing glance, and that she gave every evidence of a frank and faithful nature.

"Now let us talk about business," Lady Phillida said cheerily, after five minutes had thus passed. "Let us find out who each other is."

"That is easier for me than you," said Griselda. "As compared with me you are like a city on a hill."

"And if you are a light under a bushel," Lady Phillida rejoined, "I hope it is not to be for long."

Then Griselda gave a brief account of herself. She stated that she was an orphan, entirely alone, wholly independent, with no woman friend closer than Madame de St. Caste, that she was Scotch by birth, American by education, and that Grayburn had been her guardian.

"And I," said Lady Phillida, her hands clasped in her lap, and her large gray eyes fixed eagerly on Griselda's, "I am a woman

of the world, poor and lonely. Yes, I am poor," she repeated, in answer to an involuntary expression of surprise in Griselda's face. "Poverty and wealth are merely relative terms, and if my surroundings suggest affluence it is because I must have them. I am a professional person, you know—a sort of professional mother to motherless girls. Everybody knows it, and I am not ashamed. I give them the best I have, the best of myself, and the best of the little things I have learned not always very easily. You will find people to call me hard, or frivolous, or mercenary, or eccentric. That is only because I live my life in my own way and not in theirs. If I had put on a cap, and buried myself in a useless existence at Leamington or Tunbridge Wells, I should have passed very well in the world as a genteel widow in reduced circumstances. But I couldn't do it; I was too much of a mother. Even when my husband was living my heart always went out to the young half-fledged things who were being dragged through society by incompetent hands, or were trying to push their way for themselves. I had been a motherless girl myself, and if my dear friend Lady Glenorchie had not taken me under her

gentle wing—you know her?" Lady Phillida asked, as Griselda started slightly.

"No. I have heard of her only. Please go on. I am so interested."

"Well, if Lady Glenorchie had not befriended me I should have fared no better than many another. A girl in her social life must be like a voice in a chorus, sweet and in tune, but unobtrusive. I think you have that quality," Lady Phillida added frankly, looking at Griselda with a critical expression. "You have a personal note of your own, but one which does not startle."

"You are very kind," said Griselda, coloring and smiling. "Perhaps it is through having lived so much alone."

"Perhaps," said Lady Phillida. "You are neat, finished, modest," she went on in an appraising tone, "intelligent, competent, and not vain. You have good taste, a low voice, and a nice manner. You lack freedom rather than ease, and you are too visibly in earnest. But you have all the qualifications."

"For what?" Griselda asked.

"For whatever you want to be. I don't know your ideals, but I am sure they are good ones."

"I have none as yet; I am only a motherless girl in search of motherly protection."

"So much the better. You will find your ideals as you go on. But I was telling you how I came to take up this work. When my husband died I was left even poorer than I had been before, and I have always been poor enough. I was not only poor but lonely. Then I began to ask myself if I had any vocation which could fill up my life. It struck me one day that I had something of the same yearning towards unmothered girls which led Madame de Maintenon to found St. Cyr. Only there was this difference. Madame de Maintenon brought her girls up to the edge of their social life, and then turned them adrift. I wanted to take them where she let them go. All through the time of my heaviest mourning I used to make plans for what I should do when I began to go out again. Then one day my Solicitor, who knew how small my means were, came and asked me if I would take charge of an Australian girl. It seemed to me as though it were a special Providence, and so it was, for it taught me how not to do it. The girl was rich and dreadful. She treated me as a hired lady-companion, and

during our year together I learned more from her than she from me. My next was an English girl, rich too and an orphan, but with relatives who called me to account every three months, and addressed me as a sort of upper governess. After that I decided to pick and choose for myself. I saw my way more clearly. I would not be dependent on my solicitor's selection, and so I advertised. The result has been an *embarras de richesse*. Your own letter was but one among seventeen, and you are the seventeenth."

"Then I fear my chance is a poor one," said Griselda.

"It was till this morning. I had almost decided on a nice girl from Bermuda. But now that we have come face to face, I don't think I am rash in saying that if you will take me I will take you."

So the matter was settled, and Griselda came at once to Queen's Gate. It was then early in May, and during the season Miss Grant saw all that she could reasonably desire of London life. Lady Phillida had not been wrong in predicting for her new friend a great social success. People had nicknamed the house in Queen's Gate "The

Orphan's Home"; but as Lady Phillida's orphans were invariably rich and pretty, a new one was certain of exciting curiosity beforehand. This Griselda did not know, and so was without self-consciousness. She took her life as a matter-of-course and was quite unaware of the mingling of admiration and speculation which she created. Current reports of her wealth were exaggerated, but the general recognition of her taste, intelligence, and beauty was no more than just. Lady Phillida had never had a pupil so faithful to her social precepts, and of whom she could be so proud.

The fateful moment of the season had been the afternoon when, at Lady Keene's, Griselda had been struck by the resemblance to her own father borne by a tall young man, with fair hair and a blonde moustache.

"Who is that?" she asked with quick and unusual interest.

"Lomond, come here," Lady Phillida called promptly, and the young man came forward.

Griselda turned suddenly pale at hearing the name, but recovered herself before any one could have remarked her emotion.

Up to this moment her life in London had



been gay and amusing; now it took on a new and deeper interest. Between herself and Lomond an instantaneous sympathy arose. Sympathy quickly developed into something stronger; and when he asked her to marry him she would have sacrificed everything she possessed to do it.

"But can I?" she asked herself; and she could find no answer.

When the invitation to Lomond Lodge had come Griselda had shrunk from accepting it. There were so many reasons which made it inexpedient to go. She had yielded only in the hope that once there her path might become clearer. It was possible, she thought, that in Lady Glenorchie she might find another friend, another Madame de St. Caste or Lady Phillida. Instead, Griselda and Lomond's mother had become instinctive opponents, if not actual enemies.

It was the first check Griselda had received, and she resented it. London, with its easy going indifference to antecedents, had accepted her. Lady Glenorchie stood for the old-fashioned pride and precision of the provinces. To her Griselda was not only a rich nobody; there hung about her, in Lady Glenorchie's opinion, something of



the mystery which marks the adventuress. Miss Grant was perfectly aware of the silent, scornful sentence thus passed upon her, and her whole nature rose in proud protest and indignation. Lady Phillida had discovered that once upon a time a woman of the Wimpole family had married a Grant and gone to America. After that she jokingly called Griselda her distant cousin. The sweet smile of delicate derision with which Lady Glenorchie heard the word cousin seemed to turn the possible into the absurd. She glanced in amusement at Lady Phillida, and then turned to look Griselda up and down, not haughtily, but with gentle cruelty, as though the girl herself must enjoy the jest.

The fact that Griselda admired Lady Glenorchie made this unceasing and barely perceptible scorn the harder to bear. Apart from the fact that she was Lomond's mother, Miss Grant would have cared vastly more for the approval of this distinguished, high-bred woman than for Lady Phillida's less fastidious regard. Lady Glenorchie on her own side had moments of compunction towards Griselda. Her sense of the exquisite was too keen not to do justice to

the mingling of daintiness and dignity which Griselda carried with her, and which made Miss Dumbleton's shy reserve seem like the unformed manner of a school-girl. But the fact that she had this bearing without "birth" was in itself suspicious, and so Lady Glenorchie choked her incipient admiration down.

Thus the weeks at Lomond Lodge went by, and Griselda grew even more uncertain of her course. She had looked forward to Grayburn's coming in the hope that he could give her counsel. She had hoped that he would advise her to marry Lomond. With his support she could have done so in spite of all difficulties. Now he had failed her, and she must make her decision for herself.

For a long time she lay sobbing on the couch until her nerves grew calm. When she could cry no more she lay still—listlessly, idly, almost indifferently. Then with her accustomed energy, she rose, bathed her eyes, smoothed her hair, and adjusted her dress.

"I must think," she said to herself.

She took a chair and sat down by an open window, looking out over a beautiful extent of shrubbery to where the late sunlight

flashed and twinkled on the glass of the hot houses just visible between the trees. Her eye fixed itself on this point of light while, with characteristic conciseness, she marked out the different paths, among which she had to choose. She confronted first one alternative, then the other.

"I can definitely refuse him," she said to herself, "and go away. That will mean that I lend myself to Mr. Grayburn's plans, even if I do not marry him. It will mean that in a few days' time I declare myself the enemy of the man I love and for whom I would willingly sacrifice everything. No. The position would be terrible."

"Or," she went on, "I can marry him. If so it must be on condition that he seek to know no more than he knows at present; that he ask no question; that he leave my secret with me until I am ready to tell it. That is a hard position in which to place a man, but there is no other way. If he refuse I must refuse. To marry him thus will mean that I accept Lady Glenorchie's judgment of me as an adventuress. It will mean that he himself can hardly have any other opinion. There will always be in his mind a question as to whether he has done

right or not. As long as this secret exists it will be like a wide black and empty space between us. It will be hard for him and for his mother. It will be harder still for me. That is where my part in the sacrifice comes in. If he be ready, I shall be ready. I love him well enough to live under any cloud rather than lose him.

"I could not tell him beforehand," she went on with a shudder. "No, that would be worst of all. It would be too cruel. He would insist on the die being thrown. His honor would demand it. Then, if I lost I could not marry him. If I won, he could not marry me. There is but one way—the way of the secret and the sacrifice. It is possible to make it the way of trust and love."

She rose as she came to this decision, and her features regained their usual expression of serenity and strength. Then going to her bedside, she knelt down and buried her face in prayer. As she prayed she sobbed again. She longed so much to be like other girls. Secrecy was to her something akin to shame. But, she told herself, she would be gentle; she would disarm Lady Glenorchie's pride with humility; she would bear every-

thing, and bend to everything, and win by patience where she could not conquer by force.

When she rose from her knees she felt herself strong for action and meek for endurance, asking only for love.

## IX

Griselda, on entering the drawing room before dinner, found that she was the last to come. As Grayburn saw her at the door, he left Marignan with whom he had been talking, and went towards her. She was in white, with but two touches of color—the blue of a large and lovely turquoise at her breast, and that of another in her dark hair.

"I thought you would be here," she said, smiling as though no great question were between them. "I am so glad. Perhaps you will take me in."

"No, I take in Lady Phillida, but they may put me beside you. If not, I want to say now what I may be unable to say later, that we shall leave here to-morrow. We have so much to do and to say! And besides we shall have to go very soon to Scotland. Can you be ready for the ten-thirty train to Waterloo?"

"We?" she asked, turning pale again. "Whom do you mean?"

"You and I, of course."

"But I can't leave Lady Phillida. I am bound to her."

"Nonsense," he said with good humored impatience. "Now that I have come you must be with me. I will make everything right with Lady Phillida."

Before Griselda could reply a movement among the guests indicated that they were going in to dinner.

Marignan approached Griselda and asked if he might have the pleasure. Grayburn went forward and offered his arm to Lady Phillida. Lomond had already begun the procession with deaf old Lady Bracknell, while Lady Glenorchie, splendid in black velvet, old lace, and diamonds, came with Lord Bracknell in the rear.

At table the hostess placed Grayburn on her own left; while Griselda found herself between Lomond and Marignan. This arrangement of places had not escaped Lady Glenorchie's attention when, just before dinner, her son had submitted the list to her, but hers was the pride which would not descend to petty mistrust, and she had signified her approval.

Lomond was quite aware that Lady Bracknell much preferred to be left to her



deafness and her dinner. After his first ineffectual remark she told him so.

"But you can always hear me," he called.

"Eh? What?" she asked in her soft voice.

"You can always hear me," he shouted.

"Near you? Yes, I like to be near you. But I don't want to be any nearer."

"That isn't very kind," Lomond shouted again

"You don't mind? Neither do I; but we must respect the opinion of the table."

The old lady laughed and turned her attention to her soup.

"None are so deaf as those who will not hear," said Griselda. "Lady Bracknell's affliction must amount to a gift. She can escape so much in the way of conversation. It must be delightful to listen only when one wants to hear; and speak only when one has something to say."

"But," said Marignan, "we should miss some of the pleasantest moments of our lives if we did that."

"Quite so," said Lomond. "The best talk is not the wittiest, it is that which drifts on aimlessly between friends, whose remarks haven't perhaps the slightest value."

"I agree with you," Griselda said, "when

the talk is that of friends. But with our ordinary acquaintance we expend a great deal of energy to produce a very poor result. We talk to cover ground which we might as well pass over in silence."

"And yet the best things are often said that way," Marignan interposed. "They come by accident, like diamonds in the sand."

"Yes," Griselda said. "But there is such a lot of sand and the diamonds are so few."

"You prefer the jewels," said Marignan, "collected and cut and strung into a necklace."

"Miss Grant feels about conversation," said Lomond, "as I do about Wagner's operas. There are splendid passages here and there, but one is bored to death waiting for them. When they come one's powers of listening are played out. If they could give us the Love-Death or Siegfried's funeral march at the beginning of the first act I for one should be able to enjoy it. Then one could go home or to the club, while the rest was sung to the enthusiasts."

"Speaking of Wagner," said Griselda in a lower voice, while Marignan turned to talk with Miss Dumbleton, "do you remem-

ber the first time you came into our box at Covent Garden?"

"Yes," said Lomond, also lowering his voice and bending slightly towards her, "It was the evening after our first meeting at Lady Keene's. I remember that you would scarcely speak to me; you were so taken up with looking at the Princess of Wales."

"It was *Lohengrin*," she said, musingly.

"With Jean de Reszke and Madame Eames," he added. "How enraptured you were! and how they sang!"

"It was the problem of the two lives," she said, "which interested me more I think than the beauty of the music."

"But it is so rare a problem. It is scarcely more than situation in a dream."

"But a situation which might occur in waking life. What do you think of Elsa?"

"I scarcely know what you mean. One feels the beauty of the conception. She is so poetic a creation that it seems like defamation of character to call her weak."

"Do you think," she went on, "that anything could justify a modern man or woman asking of another such trust as *Lohengrin* demanded of her?"

There was a sudden light, like that of a

sapphire, in Lomond's blue eyes. He began to understand her.

"I think it possible," he said.

"Possible to ask such trust?"

"And possible to give it," he said, firmly.

"On whose side? The man's or the woman's?"

"On that of either."

"Think a moment," she said, while Lomond helped himself to the cutlets she had refused. "Do you sincerely think it possible for a man or woman in these days to marry as Lohengrin required that Elsa should marry him, knowing nothing of his history and not even his name? Do you believe that to be possible?"

"I can imagine circumstances under which it might be necessary."

"And what do you think would be their chances of happiness?"

"That would depend on the strength of character displayed by the two who decided to take such a course.

"Does it seem to you that Elsa and Lohengrin could have lived out their year of secrecy and trust without any shadow arising between them?"

"With a stronger nature than Elsa's, yes."

"That is probably because you think it unnecessary that a woman should know all about her husband, but essential that a man should know all about his wife. You think that an attitude of complete trust is easier for her than for him."

"In general, I suppose, that is true. But there are situations where, no doubt, the contrary is the case."

"Can you imagine a man of the world, intelligent and upright, going into a marriage blindfolded, knowing nothing, and seeking to know nothing of the woman he loves, loving her enough to trust himself absolutely to her good faith?"

"The situation would be rare, but I can believe it to exist."

"And what of the folly of the man who would venture such a step?"

"There is a woman, with whom such a step would not be folly; whom a man could not only love to the uttermost but trust in the face of all appearances."

"Am I that woman?"

"Yes. And I am that man."

"Thank you," she said softly, turning her eyes away from the flashing blue light in his.

For a few moments neither spoke. The

conversation around them was lively and there was a good deal of laughing. Marignan, guessing something of what was taking place, gave his whole attention to Miss Dumbleton. Lady Bracknell chuckled and nodded towards one or another of her friends at table, now and then making dumb-show gestures which caused a laugh. Lady Phillida and Grayburn were engrossed with each other, while Lady Glenorchie and Lord Bracknell talked of the new arrangements for Her Majesty's Drawing Room, which were giving so much dissatisfaction. Lomond and Griselda not to attract attention, engaged also in the general conversation until a convenient moment came to talk together again.

"You must forgive me for being the first to bring the subject up again," Griselda said. "I ought to have waited, but there was no time. I am in great trouble."

Lomond looked at her. She was flushed and trembling.

"You can have no trouble that is not mine," he said. "Let me help you. Let us bear everything together. We are both young and strong. There is nothing we cannot face if you love me,"

"You must know that I love you," she said with a faint smile. "You must know it as well as I know that you love me."

"I didn't know it till now. You have been so elusive, so perplexing, so contradictory."

"I had to be. I have still to be. That is where I must ask you to bear with me, to have faith that I am acting for the best, or else——"

She hesitated.

"Or else what?"

"Or else our love must end where it has begun."

"Better anything else in the world than that," he said firmly. "Don't you see that we belong to each other, that we were made for each other. Griselda, I will never let you go. Once knowing that you care for me, I will do the impossible rather than lose you. I know that in the end we can make my mother happy. She will come to see you as I do."

"That must be as it may, Nigel. I for one will work and pray for it. I will win her if it is possible for one heart to conquer another. Only if we are to succeed we must be prompt. There is no time to lose;



that is why I speak of it here and now. I told you I was in trouble, and it is this. Mr Grayburn, my guardian, will insist on taking me away to-morrow. That in itself is a small thing; but he does it because he wants to marry me."

Lomond started with astonishment.

"Of course," Griselda continued, "I can struggle and refuse; but I love him, and a life of constant battling with his will would be terrible to me. Besides," she added, confronting his gaze with an expression at once maidenly and passionate, "besides I cannot turn away from your love and give it up. It is my only refuge in the world. Will you take me into it?"

"From this moment," Lomond replied, the vibration of his voice betraying the intensity of his emotion, "from this moment I am your protector. I am all that you have never had in father, mother, or brother. I shall never ask your secret. I shall never look for any explanation but such as you yourself may give. Tell me what you care to tell, or tell me nothing at all. I love you; and I am glad, I am proud, to prove my love like this, to prove my faith, to prove my conviction that the

woman who is to be my wife is as high and holy in mind as she is beautiful in person."

"And you will not find your trust misplaced," she said, lifting her head proudly. "Of what you give me I shall prove myself worthy."

"And I too," he said, bending towards her with a deference almost humble, "I too shall try to deserve the great blessing of your love."

For a few moments there was silence. When Griselda spoke her eyes shone with tears.

"Now," she said, smiling, "I can go away. I shall be afraid of nothing."

"You shall not go away until you are known to every one here as my promised wife."

"Miss Grant," said Waynflete, leaning across the table, "do you know the difference between a chicken with its neck broken and the Tenth Sunday after Trinity?"

The lighter-minded guests were amusing themselves with riddles. Thus called upon Griselda was obliged to make some suitable reply. Again she and Lomond joined in the general talk, trying to take the same tone as their neighbors; and succeeding so

well that before another opportunity was given them for private speech Lady Glenorchie rose. Griselda tried to say a last word in passing, but finding it impossible silently followed Miss Dumbleton from the room.

"Because its neck's weak—next week, don't you see?" Waynflete called out to Griselda as he held the door open for the ladies to pass. "Very good, ain't it?"

Griselda smiled, but had for the moment neither the wit nor the will to reply.

Waynflete closed the door behind her with a mental observation that women had no sense of humor.

Lady Glenorchie led her guests not into the drawing room, but to the great hall, a large and lofty apartment of baronial aspect but neither too stately nor too cold. On the contrary the great hall was the brightest and most cheerful of all the bright and cheerful rooms in Lomond Lodge. The walls were hung with the most striking portraits—Holbeins, Vandykes, Lelys and Gainsboroughs—of the house of Tulloch. Here and there a piece of tapestry charmed the eye with its soft blues and greens. A large open fire-place with a famous carved

white marble mantel-piece, brought by the last Lord Lomond from an old house in Verona, suggested warmth and welcome. The staircase, also of white marble, carpeted in red, lent dignity to the hall and half way up its length branched off in both directions, as though to make a place for "Le bel Ecossais," who from this point of vantage looked down upon the scene. Over the mantel-piece hung Gainsborough's portrait of Alison Tulloch, whose marriage with the first Lord Glenorchie had recently brought the Lomond earldom into the house of Graham. All other furnishings of the great hall were modern, meant for use and comfort. Luxurious chairs invited the loungee to literature, contemplation, or repose. The newest books, journals, and magazines were scattered about in agreeable disorder; while in quiet corners there were tables on which were writing materials or cigars and cigarettes.

Lady Bracknell having taken a comfortable chair near the foot of the staircase, Lady Glenorchie sat down beside her, throwing herself, as it were, in a straight and high-backed Gothic seat, right in the centre of the hall. Lady Phillida and Miss Dum-

bleton in their lower places looked like dames of honor waiting on a queen. Griselda, engrossed with her own emotions, remained standing somewhat apart, idly turning the pages of *The Illustrated London News*. A servant brought in coffee. The ladies talked of the recent marriage of Lord Dover to a young lady of the music halls, the news of which Lord Bracknell had just brought down from London. Lady Phillida regretted it, Miss Dumbleton was silent, Lady Bracknell was amused.

"The wife is no doubt worthy of the husband," said Lady Glenorchie scornfully, "but I am sorry for Eliza Dover. Her son was all she had to live for, and now he is worse than dead. No misfortune is equal to that of an unworthy marriage. Other mistakes can be rectified; other troubles can be lived down. But a marriage stamps husband and wife forever and indelibly with its own peculiar quality whatever it may be. The man who marries an adventuress can never raise her to his level; he must sink to hers. She may have beauty, intelligence, and the very best intentions, but she can never be to her husband other than a great and permanent misfortune.'

Griselda, standing with the journal in her hand, distinctly heard each word, and knew that it was meant for her; but Lady Glenorchie had scarcely finished speaking when the door at the further end of the hall was opened and the men came in.

Lomond walked first; behind him Lord Bracknell and Marignan were talking together; Garth and Waynflete followed; Grayburn was last and alone.

Lomond came up the hall, walking swiftly, his head erect, his cheek flushed, his blue eyes flashing. Griselda had a sense of danger. She put down her journal and hastily moved towards him. She divined what was to follow and would have stopped him, but he was too quick for her.

Seizing her hand he led her forward to where his mother sat on her throne-like chair. The other men, seeing the action pressed on in curiosity and surprise. The group of women sat amazed and motionless.

"No, no, Nigel, not now," Griselda cried, trying to release herself and shrinking back.

"Yes, now, Miss Grant," Lady Glenorchie said with a sudden sternness, from which all her accustomed gentleness was gone.

"Yes, now," she repeated, "now as well as another time."

"You are right, mother," Lomond cried, "I bring you my future wife. Welcome her—now as well as another time."

There was a moment of deep silence. Griselda stood before Lady Glenorchie with bowed head and cheeks aflame. She was half terrified, half indignant at being thus haled, without warning or preparation, before her judge.

The minute of silence seemed long. All eyes were fixed on Lady Glenorchie, who rose slowly as though to deliver sentence. Her face was pale; her bearing regal; her black robes swept around her feet. Grayburn stood apart, turning his gaze first on one and then on another of the three chief actors in the scene. Then in a low, restrained, passionless voice Lady Glenorchie spoke.

"You cannot marry this young lady, Lomond. Do you know who she is? No, of course not. Then I will tell you, since I am sure she has not done so herself. Listen to me."

Griselda raised her head and looked at Lady Glenorchie. The flush of shame had



died from her cheek, but in her eyes there was the first bright light of anger. What would this woman say? What did she know? How far would she go?

"This young lady," said Lady Glenorchie, speaking coldly and clearly, "is the daughter of a maidservant. Her father, or reputed father, died as a felon in America. She has, however, no right to his name; she bears her mother's. Her education was probably given her as a charity. Her means come from—she herself best knows where."

"Mother, mother!" cried Lomond, making a step forward as though to force her to be silent. "Mother, for God's sake——"

"I will speak, Lomond," she said, quietly. "You have brought this on Miss Grant and on yourself. Had you come to me in private I should have told you in private. But it is better that all our friends should know the truth, than that you should bring upon yourself such dishonor. Marry her if you will, Nigel, but at least do so knowing who she is, and not as a dupe and a tool."

Lady Glenorchie sat down again. There was another pause. Lomond stood like a man shot who has not yet fallen. Grayburn

stroked his beard and made no sign. Not one of the guests moved.

Griselda stood absolutely still passing through every feeling of shame, indignation, and outraged self-respect. Had Lomond leaped instantly to her side she would have thrown herself into his arms and remained silent. But he stood near his mother, as though turned to stone. The instants were brief, but they seemed long. A great wave of anger surged up rapidly in the girl's passionate, desperate heart—of anger which enveloped mother and son together in one immense outpouring of resentment and disdain. When she spoke her voice was low but her emphasis was quick and cutting.

"I will not marry you, Lord Lomond," she said, turning towards him. "I could not now. Lady Glenorchie has told you some of the truth. Let me tell it all. You knew there was something in my life which I could not explain to you. I will do it now. I do it unwillingly, forced by insults which no woman could bear without resentment, which I at least will not bear out of respect for my own mother's name. It is true she was a maidservant. It is true my father was a felon. But it is also true that

I am their lawful child. It is true that I have borne my mother's and not my father's name. His name was Kenneth Tulloch. Had he lived he would have been Earl of Lomond."

Griselda paused. There was a slight movement and a long-drawn breath among the guests. Grayburn still stood stroking his beard and looking on. Neither Lomond nor his mother moved.

"Lady Glenorchie," said Griselda, turning towards the queen-like figure in the Gothic chair, "you know what that means. It is I who have inherited the Earldom of Lomond. I have the means to prove my right. I came to England to do so. Then I met your son. We loved each other. He asked me to be his wife. I could not tell him who I was lest his honor should have insisted on putting my pretensions to the test. In that case I might have failed. His generosity might still have been shown to me, but I could not then have accepted it. On the other hand I might have won. Then he would have accepted nothing from me. Lady Glenorchie," she went on, with a deeper ring of passion in her voice, "I loved your son well enough to give up all for

him. If you had only received me I should never have spoken of this, not till the end of time. Before answering him I came here with the one purpose of seeing you, of trying to win your affection, or at least your toleration. When I failed in that I was willing to bear your reproaches, your scorn, your worst ill-will, rather than give up the man I loved. But after your words to-night I can bear no more. I can keep silent no longer. I have my mother's honor to avenge. I claim to be Griselda Tulloch, Countess of Lomond. I contest your son's right to bear my father's name. I contest your right to rule in this house. If I fail you will have suffered no wrong. If I succeed, it will be because you by your haughty cruelty, by your never-ceasing unkindness towards a forlorn and defenceless girl have forced me to claim my own."

She paused and turning towards Lomond held out her hand.

"Good-bye," she said. "It might have been otherwise. Now it is all over."

"No, by God!" the young man cried, seizing her hand in both of his and drawing her towards him. "It shall not end thus."

"Let me go," she said, with the same air

of self-possession. "It must end thus. Good-bye. Good-bye."

Without looking at any one she turned and walked towards Grayburn.

"Take me away," she said, putting her arm in his, "now, to-night."

"Not without me," cried Lady Phillida, who broke the tension among the guests by rising and throwing her arms around Griselda. The girl clung to her with a quick almost hysterical sob, and together the two women followed by Grayburn left the hall.

Lady Glenorchie sat quite still, but she seemed to have suddenly grown old. Her face was white and haggard, her mouth drawn, and her eyes dull. But she mastered herself quickly remembering who and what she was.

"It has been quite like a scene in private theatricals," she said with an attempt to smile. "Nigel how can you be so rash? You do such impetuous things. Now that the play is over perhaps Lord Bracknell would like a game of whist."

"I don't think Lord Bracknell cares to play to-night," said Lomond significantly.

"No, no, certainly not, certainly not,"

said the old peer, rising hastily and beckoning to his wife. "I am sure it is time for us to be going; I know our carriage is at the door."

When they had gone the other guests found reasons for following their example, and Nigel and his mother were left alone.

## X

Lady Phillida, Grayburn and Griselda returned that night to London. The two ladies went to Queen's Gate, he to an hotel.

In the morning Grayburn came to see his ward. He found her in her little sitting room upstairs. She was nervously pacing up and down, a hectic spot burning on each cheek and her eyes feverishly bright.

"Come in, come in," she said with excitement in her voice, "I was going to send for you. I wanted to see you."

Grayburn, correctly dressed as usual, placed his hat and gloves on the nearest table, and going forward took both her hands in his and kissed her gravely on the forehead.

"You are a brave girl," he said. "You threw down the glove last night like a soldier."

"Did I?" she said with a nervous laugh. "I hope so. And now we must fight our battle."



"And win it."

"Yes, and win it," she repeated. "I have staked everything on that. We must not fail now or show the white feather whatever it may cost."

"It will not cost much," he said, looking down into her eyes. "Only what I asked you yesterday."

"You still desire that, after what you heard last night?"

"I never change, I never forsake the ends I have once had in view."

"You would marry me, knowing that I have given my heart elsewhere?"

"Knowing rather, that you have found yourself mistaken."

"Yes, I have found that," she said bitterly. "I was mistaken. I admit it. I thought I loved him. I thought he was brave and manly, and yet he listened without a word while I was——" Her voice broke, she could not go on.

"My little girl," he said soothingly, drawing her towards him, "you have had your first taste of the bitterness of life. But I am here to help you. To whom should you turn rather than to me? These people have despised you from the first. You were

wrong to trust yourself among them. But we shall have our revenge; and when you next go to Lomond Lodge it shall be as mistress, and with me."

"I shall never go there again, not if I were its mistress a thousand times," she said vehemently. "I want only one thing—to prove the claim I made last night, to show them that I am their equal, even if I was born amid horror and shame. I want to humble them as they have humbled me. Then they can keep the Lomond lands and the Lomond money and the Lomond titles too. I, at least, shall not take them. I want to clear my mother's name and my own honor, and make them acknowledge themselves beaten. Then I shall be content."

She began again to pace feverishly up and down the room.

"You can do all that," Grayburn said, leaning his arm on the mantel-piece, and closely watching her quick, excited movements. "You can do it easily, but not without me."

"You will help me? You will help me? I know you will help me. You would not leave me to fight this battle alone?"

She stopped before him, and he looked at her with a significant smile.

"Yes, I will help you," he said. "Of course; but at my own price, and only at that."

"Then I will pay it," she said, with a quick, strong effort, while something like the resolution of despair flashed in her eyes. "I will pay it to the uttermost; only we must win. When I have humbled them I shall care for nothing further for myself. You shall do with me what you will. I shall have sold myself to you and I will not shrink from the contract."

"Spoken again like a soldier."

"Oh, yes," she cried impatiently. "I can be brave. I have always had the quality of going on without breaking down. I shall not break down now—neither now nor later. But there is something better in life than courage, and I am losing that. I have already lost it. I shall never have it any more."

But she dashed away the tears that were gathering and controlled herself.

"Never mind, never mind," she went on, trying to laugh. "We shall at least have the excitement of the fight. We shall fill

our lives with that. We shall know that Lady Glenorchie is eating out her own heart with rage and shame and humiliation. And he? What will he do? He will go abroad I suppose; beaten by a woman; beaten by the woman he loved but whom he had not the courage to defend. He will know then what he has lost. It will be more than honors, it will be honor. Yes, yes, it is worth paying for. I will give you what you ask the very day we bring about their defeat. Go on, go on, and count on me. I shall not fail you. I shall be ready. I am ready even now. When can we begin? When can we send in our petition to the Queen? Who is this Garter King at Arms? Why cannot we go to him? I am ready—"

"Gently, gently, dear," Grayburn said, laying his hand on her shoulder and stopping her in her feverish walk. "You are nervous and over-wrought. You must not make yourself ill. You are tired and ought to rest. You have need of all your strength. I shall go away, and you had better lie down. When I come back this evening I shall explain everything to you and all our line of action. You will then be better able to understand."

Griselda controlled herself and grew more calm.

"You are right," she said, dashing her hand across her eyes. "I suppose I am tired. My head aches as well as my heart. Go away, now, and I shall be better when you return."

When he had kissed her and withdrawn, Griselda sank helplessly into the nearest chair, her emotion changed.

"After all," she said to herself, "I am to be his wife. I have sold myself! I have sold myself!" Then she moaned aloud.

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!"

The sound of her own voice startled her.

"No, no," she said to herself again. "I must not talk like that. I shall go mad if I let myself go on. I have too much to do to give way. When I have done to them as they have done to me, it will not matter. But now I must be calm and cool. I must rest."

Late in the afternoon of the same day a card was brought to Griselda bearing the name of Lord Glenorchie. She was sitting in the drawing room with Lady Phillida, trying to drink a cup of tea.

"I cannot see him," she said, as she passed the card to Lady Phillida. "Will you see him for me? Tell him what I have said. Explain to him that any further meeting between us under the circumstances would be useless to him and impossible to me. I have taken the fatal step, and I must go on."

"It may be best for me to see him," said Lady Phillida. "I can do so at any rate, and send for you if it becomes necessary."

Griselda rose to go away and, as she did so, mechanically took up the card which Lady Phillida had laid down. For the first time she took note of the change of title.

"He calls himself Lord Glenorchie," she said. "Have you noticed it?"

"Yes," said Lady Phillida, "It is delicate on his part."

"It is odious on mine," Griselda cried, "odious, horribly odious, to try to take from any one what he is in possession of and what he no doubt enjoys. I should never have done it if she had not driven me into it. But I cannot go back now. See him and tell him so. Tell him that after his fear and hesitation last night I no longer care for him. Tell him that I do not want his

money or his lands and that I only contest his title for my mother's sake. Is it not too hideous," she cried with a sudden change of tone, "that I, a girl, should be placed in this position? And yet I must go on with the struggle to the bitter end."

Lady Phillida said nothing. She was not in sympathy with Griselda's new situation, though she was loyal to the girl herself. She thought her claim to the Lomond earldom chimerical, likely to end in confusion and disaster.

When Griselda had gone, Lord Glenorchie, as he had decided to call himself, was shown up. He had come straight from Ascot.

Lady Phillida went forward and took his hand.

"Excuse me," she said, "for being here, but Griselda asked me to see you. She herself felt unequal to doing so."

He looked haggard and tired, and Lady Phillida felt sorry for him.

"Sit down," she went on, "and have a cup of tea with me. It will do you good. You don't look as though you had eaten anything to-day."

"I have not," he said, as he took the seat Griselda had left. "Thank you. I will



take some tea. That is Griselda's empty cup, isn't it? She has just gone upstairs. Why wouldn't she see me?"

"She isn't well enough," Lady Phillida said, as she passed him his cup. "She did not sleep last night, and to-day she is very nervous."

"I am nervous too," he said, swallowing his tea hastily. "Good heavens, what a mess we are in! How are we ever to get out of it? What does Griselda mean? What is she going to do?"

"If you want me to speak candidly, I think she is going to push her case and try to take your earldom."

"She can have it," he cried, impatiently. "I shall not defend it. I never thought it impossible that an heir to Kenneth Tulloch should turn up, though I didn't expect the news to come like this."

"What are you going to do then?"

"Do? What can I do? I can only let Griselda and that adventurer Grayburn bring their case before the lords. I sit among them only in my barony. I have not yet made any petition for the Scotch earldom even though I have assumed the title. The estates have simply been put

into my hands by the late earl's executors."

"What does your mother think?"

"She thinks as I do, that our only plan is to relinquish everything that has come to us through the Lomond interest until Griselda has formally put forth her claim. It will be humiliating but it must be done. I was wrong to have assumed the title so soon, and without more investigation. In any case I don't want it. I am sick of it. The only thing I care for is to have Griselda for my wife, and now I suppose she won't look at me."

"She certainly says she will not marry you. She thinks that you deserted her last night, that you should not have listened to attacks upon her name without springing to her defence."

"Will you be good enough to tell me what I was to do? I couldn't strike my mother dumb."

"Griselda herself in the end accomplished that."

"Yes. It was her powder and shot that told at last."

"How did your mother learn so much about her? I certainly didn't know the two

or three exciting facts relative to Griselda's origin with which we were entertained last night."

"Upon my life I don't know. I have asked her but she refuses to tell. I can't help suspecting that that cad Grayburn has had some hand in it."

"Excuse me, Nigel," Lady Phillida said, coloring slightly and beginning to move aimlessly the cups on the table, "but I don't think you should call Mr. Grayburn a cad, nor even an adventurer as you did a moment ago. He is not only a gentleman by birth but a most able and interesting man. It is in fact his connection with this case which alone makes me feel that there may be something more to Griselda's claim, than at first one might suppose."

"I will call him anything you please," he cried, getting up and striding across the room, "if you will only let me see Griselda. Why did she run away? She must know that we can't end the matter like this. There is much that we must talk about and explain. She must see me. Go to her, please, Lady Phillida, and ask her to come down, if only for ten minutes, if only for five, if only for one, just that I may see her,

just that I may feel that she has not dropped out of my life like a star from the sky. Do go to her."

"You poor boy," Lady Phillida said, smiling affectionately. "I will go, though I can't promise that she will come. Perhaps she will be wiser not to do so, but I will go and ask her all the same."

When left alone Glenorchie stood with his eyes fixed upon the door. Presently it opened and Griselda glided in, closing it softly behind her.

"Griselda! My darling!" Glenorchie cried, making a quick movement as though he would take her in his arms.

"No, no," she said, raising her hand. "Stay there. Do not come near me. I have come only because you sent for me. If you have anything to say I will hear it and go away."

She kept her place close by the door. She was dressed in black and was very pale. Glenorchie thought he had never seen her so lovely.

"Anything to say!" he cried. "I have all to say. Do you not see, Griselda, that after we have acknowledged our love, after the promise you gave me at dinner last night,

after that I gave you, do you not see that we cannot part like this? It is madness. It is out of the question."

"We do not part," she said, "we have been parted. We ought never to have known each other. It is my fault. When I first knew who you were I should have let our acquaintance cease. I should never have gone to Ascot. When I saw that Lady Glenorchie despised me so I should have come away. But I could not have foreseen last night. You did wrong to drag me like that before her."

"Yes, I know," he said, quickly, "at least I know it now. But I wanted to take my mother by surprise. I wanted to present you to her before others. In private I knew I had no chance, but I thought that in public she would yield. I counted on her pride, on her horror of anything unconventional or theatrical. I was mistaken. I confess it. But I, too, could not have foreseen the bombs that were thrown both on your side and on hers."

"Even so, when you saw me wounded and broken you might have come to my aid. But you doubted me. Yes, you doubted me. You believed what you heard. You

assumed that I was guilty. It may have been only for a night, it may have been only for a moment, but while the doubt lasted you allowed me to be scourged with words which cut more sharply and deeply than cords and which neither of us ever can forget."

"Griselda, I never doubted——" he began.

"Let me go on," she interrupted. "Had you come to my side, had you taken my hand, when your mother held me up to scorn I should never have spoken in my own defence. But you did nothing. Yes, yes, I know you would have stopped her if you could, but you none the less left me alone, and so the fatal word which must separate us was spoken. And it cannot be withdrawn. It is too late. For reasons which it would only pain you more to tell you now, it is too late. When I said good-bye to you last night it was forever. Henceforth you must regard me as an enemy."

"There is such a thing as friendly litigation."

"Not in a case like this. Too much has been said; too much has been felt. Too many serious interests hang on the issue."

"And yet," he said, with an impatient gesture, "and yet, you say you loved me."

"Yes, I loved you," she said unflinchingly.

"And love me still."

"No, I do not admit that. I don't know what I feel for you. Everything is changed since last night, and we are further apart than if we had never known each other."

"You are incomprehensible," he exclaimed. "Is there nothing I can do to please you, to content you, to save the situation?"

"Nothing. There was a moment when you could have done it, but it passed. Now we must fight our battle in public, and abide by the issue of the struggle."

"And afterwards? What then? I shall see you. We can still be friends. We can still perhaps make all come right."

"No," she said in a faint voice, "don't count on that."

"I will count on it, Griselda. We shall see. Love is stronger than you with your cold reasoning suspect."

"Not here," she said, still more faintly.

"Here more than elsewhere," he insisted.

"Perhaps," she said, with a visible effort, "perhaps I had better tell you now what



you must in any case learn later. I meant to have kept it from you to save you from further pain; but we shall understand each other better if you know at once. I have already promised to marry some one else."

"Oh, Griselda," he cried in the tone of a man who has been stabbed.

"Yes," she went on cruelly; "I am to marry Mr. Grayburn."

"But why? Why? Couldn't you have waited?"

He came nearer as he spoke, his face drawn with pain.

"No, I could not wait. It is he who holds the proofs which alone can clear my mother's honor."

"And you have sold yourself to gain them?"

"Yes.

"And to avenge yourself on my mother?"

"And on you."

They looked at each other in silence. Then with his eyes still fixed upon her, he slowly took his hat and gloves from the table where they lay, and bowing to her coldly, left the room.

She listened to his footsteps descending the stairs. She heard them resound on the

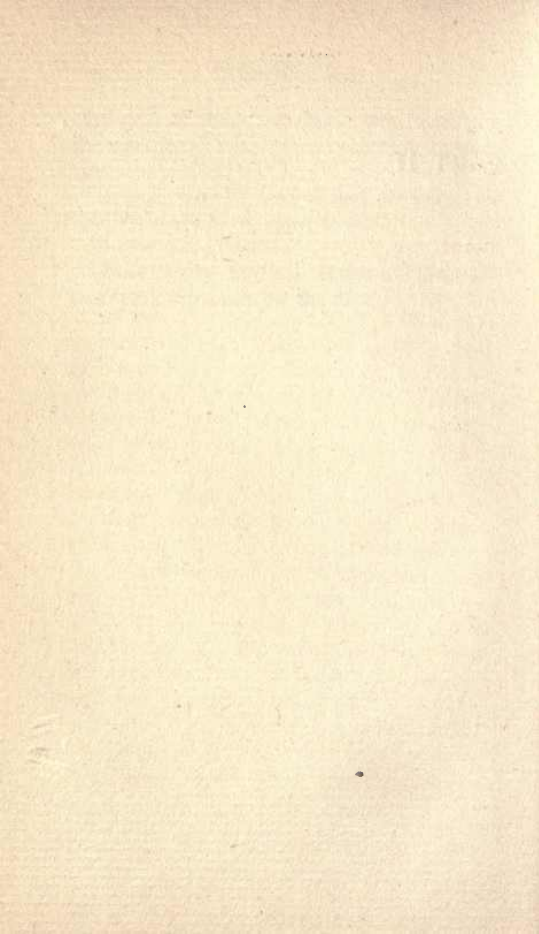
tilled floor of the hall below. She heard his hand on the latch. Then she rushed after him.

"Nigel, Nigel," she called desperately.  
"Nigel, come back, come back."

But he was gone.

When Lady Phillida returned, Griselda was lying senseless on the floor.

## PART II



## XI

Six months later, on a bright February morning, Griselda, dressed in a loose, lace-like, white morning robe, was seated before a blazing fire in her little sitting room up stairs. Her breakfast stood untasted on the table, while she herself, pale and pensive, sat with eyes fixed upon the crackling flames. On the hearthrug lay a torn envelope bearing the inscription, "*On Her Majesty's Service*," and addressed to "*The Right Honorable, the Countess of Lomond*." In Griselda's lap was a large, unfolded paper, of legal aspect, which she had just received and opened. It was the official intimation that her cause was won.

It was not precisely a surprise; for she had been informed already that the Committee for Privileges of the House of Lords had passed a resolution to the effect that "Griselda Tulloch had made out her claim to the honor and dignity of Countess of Lomond in the Peerage of Scotland, and that this resolution should be reported to

the House." But the reception of this official document put the seal upon certainty. It was not a declaratory patent, but it had the same effect.

Griselda had thus obtained her object. She had cleared her name; she had proved her mother's honor; she had avenged herself on the house of Graham.

It had been very easy; there had been no struggle after all. Some doubt had been expressed at first, and a little ridicule had been thrown by the press on her pretensions; but Grayburn had so prepared her case that it was only necessary for the proofs to be presented. The Glenorchies had withdrawn altogether from the contest. Within forty-eight hours after Griselda's departure from Ascot, Lady Glenorchie had retired to her dower-house in Kent. Within a week all trace of her residence at Lomond Lodge had been removed, and the place where Le bel Ecossais had hung was significantly empty. Lady Glenorchie would not remain where her right to rule was questioned. Neither would she fight, nor allow her son to fight. For her such a course would lack dignity and pride.

"A Graham of Glenorchie," she told her

son, "does not strive for things like this. He fights for honor, but not for honors—for his queen, or his country, or his own name, but not for titles and estates. They come to him by self-evident birth-right, or they do not come at all. Let this young person put forth her extraordinary claim. Let her prove it if she can. In that case let her take all that belongs to her. We neither need nor desire anything that can be hers. When she fails, as I am convinced she will, our rights will be incontestible."

And Glenorchie agreed with his mother, though not wholly on her grounds. He ceased to call himself Earl of Lomond, and to bear the Tulloch arms. Lomond Lodge and House of Tulloch were handed back to the late earl's executors, and all moneys which had been paid to him from the Lomond estates were restored. His lawyers were instructed to watch the case in his interest as next-of-kin, but to present no counter-petition.

In all this the young man felt a bitter pleasure. Griselda had been unjust to him; he would prove that he could be generous to her. Her object had been to humiliate his mother and him, but he would show how



cheaply they held a title by letting her take it if she could. Griselda should understand from the outset that he would grant everything which she could reasonably claim, and that however much she might desire the excitement of an open conflict there should be no unseemly struggle between him and her.

And yet the perception of this attitude on Glenorchie's part came but slowly to the young girl's mind. During the months which intervened between the presentation of her petition to the Queen, and the trial of her case at Westminster, Griselda had lived in a state of nervous exaltation. The scene at Lomond Lodge was always in her mind; the words then spoken gained in intensity with the lapse of time. By dwelling on them she lent fire to their force, and lost her sense of fairness. Her usual tranquil common-sense gave way to an exaggerated bitterness. She felt herself dishonored and despised by those whose esteem and love she would have sacrificed all to gain. Since, then, she could not win them she would crush them; since they would not yield their love she would compel their hate. From the moment when Glenorchie left her in

silent indignation, she never forgot his expression of reproach. Into it she had since read derision and disdain. She fancied him now treating her without mercy. So be it; she would show none to him.

As time went on the mother passed into the background of her thought. All her anger was directed against the son. Once she had imagined that she loved him; now she laughed hysterically at the very memory of that grotesque mistake. She loved him, so she said, no more than he loved her. Her only object was to give him pain. If she could once know that he had suffered on her account and by her act,—suffered as she had suffered on his account and by his act—then she would be content; she would give her hand to Grayburn with a smile, as the thirsty wanderer who has had one delicious draught of water is able to travel bravely on.

It was not until they again met face to face, before the lords at Westminster, that Griselda knew how foolish all this fancied fury was. As she sat now gazing at the fire, her thoughts went back to the incidents of that morning. She had taken her place

with Lady Phillida in the stately chamber in the House of Lords, where her case was to have its hearing. Her memory of details was indistinct. She had been too confused and nervous to pay much heed to surroundings and formalities. Lady Phillida told her that the attendance of lords was large, and she remembered counting seven, of whom she recognized two or three. In addition to these were two bishops, and the Lord Chancellor. She herself felt like a prisoner at the bar, rather than as the claimant to wealth and dignity.

Every one who entered looked at her with curiosity, and she recalled now how she had summoned all her force of character to her aid, how she had nerved herself to be brave under the gaze of onlookers. Then she had suddenly raised her eyes and had seen Nigel enter—tall, fair, scrupulously well dressed, and handsomer than ever. He stood for a moment at the open door, evidently seeking her. Their eyes met, and he bowed, first to her and then to Lady Phillida. Then coming forward he seated himself near his counsel.

In that instant of interchanged regards all Griselda's passion for revenge had disap-

peared like a lifting mist. She had seen him, and knew henceforth that there could be no more place in her heart for rancor or retaliation. In his face there was a perceptible change which smote her more sharply than any pain she could suffer on her own account. He was more grave than in the past, and a certain look of youth was gone. On his features there was that unmistakable stamp which some deep feeling, some great mental or spiritual anguish, inevitably leaves behind.

"And this is my work," Griselda said to herself. "I would have died to save him from one hour's pain and now——"

She bent her head and struggled to repress a rising sob. At that moment she would have willingly denied all her claim to the Lomond title, would gladly have renounced all her cherished projects of revenge, would have buried herself under obloquy and scorn, if only the man she loved could have looked as when she had first known him, young and glad, and in the keen enjoyment of his life. But events had progressed too far. She was in the grip of circumstance, and could free neither herself nor him.

The futile tears blinded her; the surging protests of her heart against the part she had played and was playing, rendered her unconscious of what was going on. She had a confused sense of a murmur of voices, and of uninteresting persons, parish clerks and country lawyers, called from an adjoining room, interrogated, and sent back again.

Garret King at Arms and Lyon King at Arms presented pedigrees and explained certificates of births, baptisms, marriages, and deaths. The Lord Chancellor and the Lord Advocate of Scotland asked questions and the heralds answered them. After what seemed to Griselda an unnecessary display of effort, considering the general knowledge of the fact, it was established that Kenneth Stuart Maximilian Neil, twenty-ninth Earl of Lomond was dead and buried, having left the field free to his heirs. It was also proved that the said Earl, by his marriage with the Lady Jane Macpherson had had one son, the Honorable Kenneth Stuart Ferdinand Neil Tulloch, commonly called Lord Inversnaid, who had predeceased his father, having been hanged for murder in the State of Colorado, in the

United States of America. It was next made clear that the claimant, Griselda Tulloch, had petitioned the Queen, praying Her Majesty to be graciously pleased to admit her succession to the honor and dignity of Countess of Lomond, in the Peerage of Scotland, as the lawful heir of the said Lord Inversnaid by his marriage with Griselda Grant. This petition Her Majesty had referred to the House of Lords, and the House of Lords to its Committee for Privileges, with instructions to safeguard the interests of the Right Honorable Nigel, Baron Glenorchie, of Glenorchie Castle in Aberdeenshire, claiming to be next-of-kin, after the direct heirs of the late twenty-ninth Earl of Lomond.

All this had taken place with a certain perfunctory decorum and ceremonious informality. It was like a conversation rather than a trial, like a rehearsal rather than a play.

Then Griselda's counsel made a long speech on her behalf. As she listened she vaguely understood that a history of the Lomond earldom was being traced back to the almost legendary period of Scottish history. Twice already had the title passed

into the female line; once, in the sixteenth century when Margaret Tulloch, maid of honor to Mary of Guise, had become Countess of Lomond in her own right, and again in the seventeenth century when Janetta Tulloch had succeeded her grandfather the anglicizing lord, the friend of Charles I and one of the founders of Scottish Episcopalianism.

The principle of female tenure being thus established Griselda's advocate went on to state that if the twenty-ninth Earl of Lomond had left any lawful descendant, male or female, such descendant must be regarded as heir to the Earldom as well as to the entailed estates. The barony of Inversnaid, on the contrary, which the late earl had also possessed, could pass only to a male heir, and must become extinct on the accession of a female. Now it would be shown as already stated that the twenty-ninth earl by his marriage with Lady Jane Macpherson had had an only child, Lord Inversnaid. It would also be shown that the said Lord Inversnaid had contracted a secret but lawful marriage with one Griselda Grant, a maid-servant, of the parish of Glen Tulloch in Argyllshire; and that of this



marriage there was legitimate issue in the person of Griselda Tulloch, here present, claiming to be Countess of Lomond.

Griselda had gone over all this ground so often that she scarcely listened to the statement of her case. Her attention was only roused when Lady Phillida suddenly grasped her hand and said,

"Listen. The old minister is going to take the stand."

It was Lady Phillida who had entered with Grayburn into all the details of preparation. Griselda knew but vaguely what evidence was to be given on her behalf. Now she looked up and saw a tall old man, with clean shaven face and long white hair, come forward and place himself in view of the assembly. He wore the ordinary dress of a Scotch Presbyterian minister and carried a large manuscript volume.

"My name is Colin Campbell," he said, after he had been put on oath. "I am minister of the parish of Glen Tulloch, and a doctor of divinity."

His voice was clear but quavering, and he spoke with the sharp Highland accent, now and then inadvertantly lapsing into dialect. He held his book clasped in both hands

before him as he was used to hold his Bible in the pulpit.

"Will you be good enough," said the Lord Chancellor, "to state what you know of the facts in the case now before this Committee?"

"I well remember the late Lord Lomond," the old man went on. "I was tutor to his son the late Lord Inversnaid. When the young lord went to Harrow his old lordship put me into the parish of Glen Tulloch, and rebuilt the manse. The earl was pleased to honor me with his friendship, and Lord Inversnaid with his affection. All through the young man's earlier years I lived on terms of intimacy with them both, there being no persons of gentility within many miles."

Griselda listened intently now. At last the veil was to be lifted; she was to know something more than Grayburn's few dry and dreadful facts, of that father and mother of whom she had heard so little, but had dreamt so much.

"I hold in my hand," the minister continued, "my journal written day by day through all those years, and I know that its contents are true. I have recently refreshed my memory as to the events then chronicled,

and yet it was but little necessary, for all, save certain details of conversation, is as clear to me now as it was then. You will pardon me, I trust, my lords, if I seem diffuse, and you will correct me, I beg, if I narrate what is unnecessary; and yet if I tell the tale from the beginning I cannot but think that the circumstances will be better understood."

The old man cleared his voice, put on his gold-rimmed spectacles, looked for a moment at certain pages of his journal and began again.

"When I became tutor to Lord Inversnaid he was but eight years old. I was a young man fresh from the University, and lived with my pupil at House of Tulloch. Lord Lomond himself resided in England, seeing his son only in the summer time. It was said, and I partly believe it, that my lady having died at the young lord's birth, Lord Lomond never loved the child as a father should love a son. Certain it is that they lived apart, the lad growing up with servants and such like, and with no genteel companionship but mine. He was a pretty boy, frank and affectionate, but all the worst and wildest qualities of the headstrong

race of Tulloch were in his blood. From his earliest childhood he inclined to the precepts of neither law, gospel, nor Shorter Catechism. In my charge of him love and correction were alike in vain. When he would do a thing, he would do it; and you could neither win him with caresses nor conquer him with stripes. He was not precisely bad; he was simply lawless. My five years of tutorship were spent as it were in fighting fire; and yet the lad was so winsome that every one but his father loved him."

The minister gave a little nervous cough, as though to hide a trembling of his voice.

"I will not weary your lordships," he went on again, "with any further account of my pupil's youth. Suffice it to say that as he began so he continued. What was wildness in boyhood became wickedness in manhood; and when at three and twenty he returned to take up his residence at House of Tulloch he had long been seasoned in sin. He had been expelled from Harrow, expelled from Cambridge, and father and son had so little in common that one roof was not sufficient to shelter them. So he returned to us in Scotland, and I who loved the man as I had

loved the boy did what I could to lead him into paths of virtue. But it was in vain, my lords. Other companions had greater influence than mine. Lord Lomond came no more to Scotland, and Inversnaid was master at House of Tulloch. Hither came many young gentlemen of his own type and the description of the life they led would be neither pleasant nor profitable to such lords and ladies as I now see before me. I will go on to the more important facts. In the midst of those wild and riotous days I was surprised one evening to receive at the Manse a visit from Inversnaid. He rushed in upon me as I sat writing at my desk, crying out in an excited way: 'Oh, dear old Dominie,' for that was the name he usually gave me, 'I want you to marry me.' 'Sit down,' I said in a quiet voice, trying to calm him by feigning to be cool myself. 'To whom?' 'To Griselda Grant, the maid at the Arms,' he said, meaning, my lords the Tulloch Arms, our village inn. 'Do you think such a marriage wise?' I asked. 'No, I do not,' he answered, 'but I cannot get her in any other way.' I leave your lordships to imagine my state of anguish. I labored with the young man till nearly

dawn, but argument only served to increase his determination.

“ ‘I love her,’ he repeated over and over again, ‘and if I cannot marry her with the blessing of the Kirk I will marry her Scotch fashion, and make that suffice. She will be my wife even so, and to satisfy the law is all I mind. I love her and I will have her.’ ”

“ ‘But you loved Jeannie Ferguson, and Annie Campbell, the wheelwright’s girl, and Thomas Carmichael’s daughter, and look at them now, poor unfortunate creatures, neither maids nor married women.’ ”

“ ‘Dominie!’ he cried in a towering rage, springing from his seat and bending over me, ‘if you mention her again in connection with that company of wantons I will kill you.’ ”

“ ‘Then I saw, my lords, that the young man had respect for the lassie, and I dinna wonder at it for I knew her weel.’ ”

In his agitation the old man slipped into the vernacular, but corrected himself quickly.

“ ‘All that,’ he continued, after a moment’s hesitation, “ ‘was many years ago. But neither time nor change can dim the memory of Griselda Grant, in the minds of those who

have once looked upon her face. She was such a maiden as appears from time to time among our Scottish peasantry, where a race, for the most part plain of feature, produces at long intervals a type of extraordinary beauty. Of middle height, she was slender, supple, graceful, and strong. Those are the words I wrote of her in my journal, over twenty years ago. Her dark eye was large and soft, and seemed always to appeal for kindness. Her hair was brown and most abundant, her face was small and oval, and her mouth a wonder of beauty, whether in repose, or in speaking, or when in smiling she disclosed her small, white, pearl-like teeth. I have it all here in my journal, my lords, so that you may know that it is true. If you would see her somewhat as she was, but less lovely, you may look at the young lady there, who sits before you."

All eyes were turned, with a smile, towards Griselda, who, heedless of remark and regard alike, sat gazing at the old man's earnest face. Her whole heart was absorbed in this account of the mother who thus seemed to spring into life before her.'

"Her mind was equal to her person. Though the child of a simple shepherd she



had taught herself to speak and write with almost the same punctilious correctness which is common to the quality. She was versed in Scripture, and trained in the truest spirit of religion. In her humble station at the Tulloch Arns she bore herself in such a way as to win the esteem of homebred companions and the passing public alike. I myself made many an unnecessary errand to the inn simply that I might take occasion to converse with her, and admire the works of the Creator in a form so discreet and lovely. The effect this maid produced upon me has always been, my lords, of a nature wholly beyond my comprehension; but so strong was it, that when Lord Inversnaid was set to marry her I was moved on every ground to circumvent him."

He paused again, and turning the leaves of the journal, searched for a particular page.

"I have here," he continued, "the record of the visit paid by me on the following day to Griselda Grant herself. I found her in a state of great agitation, and as determined in her attitude as Lord Inversnaid in his.

" 'I love him,' she repeated in answer to all my reasonings, 'and if he will marry me I will marry him.'

“‘But,’ I expostulated, ‘think of the scandal of a marriage so far above your station.’

“‘I know,’ she made answer. ‘I have thought of it, but I cannot help myself. I love him, sir, so well that I am not strong enough to resist him. If only he will marry me I will marry him. It is not because he is a lord; it is because I love him, and if he leaves me or I leave him then my heart will break. I shall not be able to live longer.’

“‘To this, my lords, we returned as the end of all pleadings and all arguments. At last she broke into a fit of weeping, and with her hands clasped across the table at which we sat, with the tears streaming from her eyes, and her brown hair falling like tendrils about her face she besought me not to send him from her, or to put my influence between them. So strongly did she plead, and with so much beauty of word and feature that, as I grieve to say, I myself forgot my dignity and position and cried out (I have it written in my journal) ‘Oh, Griselda, will you marry me?’ It was a moment of great weakness I confess, but had any of you, my lords, beheld her thus I think that you would have been moved to do no less. But

the lassie was wiser than I. She simply wept and gave me no answer at all; by which I saw that she would not compromise my situation at the manse, but would marry him on whom her heart was set."

The old man's voice at this moment quivered with an emotion which he could not control, but he went on tremblingly.

"My moment of folly was fatal to us all. I could no longer with conscience dissuade another from what I had been ready, if only for an instant, to undertake myself. The next day in the Kirk of Glen Tulloch I myself blessed and solemnized the marriage of Lord Inversnaid and Griselda Grant before God and before witnesses. Since then I have had no desire for matrimony for myself. I have only to add, my lords, that if there is issue of this marriage, it is lawful issue according to all laws of God, and of the realm of Scotland."

Amid a murmur of sympathy he stopped, closed his book, took off his spectacles and wiped them on his pocket handkerchief. Then Glenorchie stepped forward and taking the aged minister's arm led him from the room. Griselda would gladly have done the same had she dared to leave her place.

As it was she could only consecrate to him in silence all her heart's best gratitude and affection.

The register of the parish of Glen Tulloch was next put in evidence, and a large burly florid gray-bearded Scotchman began to speak.

"My name," he said, "is Alexander Mackenzie. I have been thirty years inn-keeper at the Tulloch Arms. Lord Inversnaid was a frequenter of my house, where I gave employment to Griselda Grant. I was present with my wife at their marriage in the Kirk of Glen Tulloch, the young lord having first sworn us to secrecy. I swear that this is my signature. I swear that this is the signature of my wife Jessie Mackenzie, now dead. I swear that this, Kenneth Tulloch, is the signature of the late Lord Inversnaid. I swear that this is the signature of Griselda Grant. I swear that this is the signature of Colin Campbell, minister of Glen Tulloch. I swear that this is the signature of Robert Grant, brother of Griselda Grant. I swear that I saw all these signatures written with their own hands on the date here given, by the aforementioned persons in Glen Tulloch Kirk."

"My name is Robert Grant," said the next witness, and Griselda could not repress a low, sudden, exclamation of sentiment and emotion. Lady Phillida put out her hand, for the girl started as though she must rise and go to the man who stood before her. Here at last was someone of her own flesh and blood, her mother's brother, between whom and herself there was the sacred tie of kinship, the tie which she had never known.

He was a slight man of about fifty, not tall, but evidently agile. His clean-shaven face was regular in feature, and Griselda fancied that in it she could see a distinct resemblance to her own. The eyes were dark and soft as the old minister had described those of the first Griselda; their expression was dreamy and distant like that of a man who lives in the unseen. He was neat and clean, and in his Sunday clothes had a certain air of home-bred, peasant-like distinction.

"I am a shepherd," he continued, "and live the noo on the hills of Morven. Griselda Grant was my ain sister. When she went to live at the Tulloch Arms, I counseled her against the attentions of ungodly

gentlemen, of which as I knew verra weel there were mony at the House of Tulloch. Having neither feyther nor mither there was only me to warn her, and help her shun the path that leadeth to perdition. She was a braw lassie and well-dowered with that female beauty which the gude Lord sends here and there as a trial and a snare to men. Well, my lords and ladies, she was no verra long at the Tulloch Arms before word was sent me that wild Inversnaid was daft about her. I was then on Glenconnell's estate, in the further corner of Argyll, but I left all and went to find my erring sister. 'Grizzel,' I said to her, 'the day ye become that young man's victim will be his last on airth. If ye have any affection for him, flee from his embrace, for he shall pay the penalty of his crime in blood.' 'Have no fear, Robert,' she replied to me, 'for I shall never yield to him, except in honest marriage.' 'There can be no honest marriage between one of your degree and one of his,' I said to her; whereat she fell to crying, and I left her. My lords and ladies, I had scarce returned to Glenconnell when from the same source as before—a lassie at the Arms whose feyther was fellow-shepherd

with me—I heard talk of a marriage between my sister and Inversnaid. Back I hurried to Glen Tulloch, not without a weapon, swearing that the shame of no such marriage should be on the head of my feyther's child. It was night-fall when I reached the Arms, and learned that not an hour before my sister had left the inn, in company with Sandy Mackenzie, her master, and his wife, all three taking the road to the Kirk. I followed and entered—only to find my sister and Inversnaid already in the act of the betrothal. My lords and ladies, if it hadna been in the house of God I would ha' shot the one and the other there and then. But I couldna commit sacrilege as well as crime; and when a' was over the minister turned to me and said, 'Robert Grant, what is done canna be undone. Give me yon weapon, and bear your troubles like a man. Remember that it might ha' been far worse, for noo the lassie is at least a married woman. Come into the vestry and sign to what you have seen.' My lords and ladies I followed the counsel of the holy man, and put aside my thoughts of vengeance. When I had signed I shook my sister by the hand, and left her



with him whom she had chosen for better and for worse. I couldna forgive her all at once, but I trust I ha' done so since. I never saw her any more. I swear that this is my signature. I swear that the marriage was a lawful one."

He stopped abruptly and then, looking round the hall with great, slow, dreamy eyes, gazed for a moment at Griselda. She too looked at him, unable to do more, powerless to give him any sign of her interest and emotion. Then, with his shambling shepherd's gait, he left the room by the door through which he had come.

The current of Griselda's thought was however quickly changed, for a distinct heightening of expectation was perceptible throughout the room when, a moment later, Grayburn himself took the stand. His air of the mature and experienced man of the world, at once dignified and deferential, carried with it a certain conviction in advance of what he had to say. The spectator had an involuntary feeling that the cause of which he was the champion must be right. Lady Phillida hastily pressed Griselda's hand, and then fixed her eyes upon the speaker.

In a deep, melodious voice, with very distinct enunciation Grayburn told of his early friendship with Inversnaid, and confirmed all that had been said by the minister of Glen Tulloch. Over this he passed rapidly, and came to a date just subsequent to his friend's asserted marriage. Here he asked permission to read a short letter which he had received in London.

" 'Dear Gray' " it ran, " 'I am in a devil of a mess. I am married. You can guess to whom. The pater has thrown me over—disowned me in fact. Perhaps I don't blame him. I should not care so much if it were not for Griselda's sake. Poor girl, she is heart-broken. Don't say anything about all this, for as yet it is known to very few. Can't you come to me, and bring some money with you? I don't know which way to turn, or what to do. We are at King James's Lodge up the burn behind Glen Ellen, as hints were given from headquarters that we had better leave House of Tulloch. Come to us for God's sake, and give us an idea as to what to do.

" 'Your old friend,  
" 'Inversnaid.' " "

This, Grayburn went on to say, was but one of many letters which he held in his hand, the authenticity of which could

easily be proved. In all of them the fact of the marriage was either mentioned or assumed. He then told of his visit to King James's Lodge, where the result of their conferences was the decision that all three should try their fortunes in America.

Inversnaid had a little money from his mother, an inheritance which had since passed to his child, and become the foundation of her fortune. Grayburn, estranged from his own family, had even less, but enough for present need. They went to New York and then drifted towards the West. They finally reached the newly-founded mining town of Lost Man Creek, known to-day as Millersville. Inversnaid and his wife traveled first under the name of Tulloch, but, owing to an unpleasant occurrence in New York, where he had been recognized and she subjected to insulting remark, they took, in going west the name of Grant.

At Lost Man Creek they decided to settle and try to retrieve their fortunes. The town had passed the first stages of the mining-camp, and was endeavoring to reduce itself into a rude state of law and order. Inversnaid made an effort to work

and to rearrange his life; Grayburn saw before them a possibility of success; and the young wife expecting to become a mother was for the first time almost happy.

Then suddenly their trouble came upon them. The man who in New York had recognized Inversnaid appeared in Lost Man Creek. He was a disgraced English gentleman who had been sent to America to begin his life again. At first he only made himself objectionable, and they avoided him. Then he renewed his insolent attentions to Griselda. One day Inversnaid returning home found his wife prostrated and in tears. She told how the Englishman had again insulted her, and Inversnaid had sworn that this time should be the last. The stranger fled towards a mining camp, far in the heart of the mountains. Inversnaid followed him. He was absent three days. When he returned he was strangely calm and silent. His arrest took place in the following week, and at the trial he was condemned to death. Every effort was made to secure a pardon, or at least a reprieve, but without avail. The governor of the State was determined that the day

for private judgment and revenge must cease. The man called Grant had hunted his victim and tracked him down. It was but one of many such lawless acts which had lately taken place, and an example must be made.

"I will not dwell, my lords, on those sad days," Grayburn went on. "I will speak only of what it is necessary should be shown. On the eve of my poor friend's death I was allowed to visit him in the prison. There I received his last wishes and directions. I found him calm, resigned, and in a certain sense penitent. That is, he regretted his life from the very first. 'It was all wrong,' he said, 'and could only finish in this way. I am not sorry that it should be over. I have been a miserable, unhappy creature, Gray, through all my daring and bravado. I shall be glad to be under the sod. My only regret is that a Tulloch should come to his end like this.' Then he said to me—and, my lords, you can understand that every word spoken at such a moment has remained in my memory as though printed in letters of fire—he said to me, taking my hand: 'We have been dear friends, Gray, if not precisely wise

ones. I have nothing to leave you but the care of Griselda and the child when it comes. Here is my will. The little fortune which came to me from my mother I leave to my wife and after her to the baby. The wording of the will is evidence in itself that I acknowledge them both as mine by blood and law alike. See that the testament is carried out. Do what you can with my father. He may soften a bit when he knows that I am gone. I won't give you any more directions. I know you will act for the best. I ask you only as my dying wish to see that my wife and child are put into the place which belongs to them.' Then, my lords, the warder came and I had to go. Inversnaid threw himself into my arms and kissed me many times, as though we had been two children. When at the door I looked back at him he stood smiling to the last; but before the key turned in the lock behind me I heard his despairing and heart-breaking sobs."

There were other sobs at that moment, for Lady Phillida was weeping, and throughout the hall there was a sympathetic sense of sorrow for the ruined life which might have been so fair. Grayburn himself, upheld by

his iron nerve, seemed less moved than any one and went calmly on.

As for Griselda she could bear no more. As Grayburn told in his clear and quiet way the story of her own birth, of her mother's death, of his repeated letters to Lord Lomond which met with no response, of his determination to bring up the child himself, of the pains he had been at during the last twenty years to collect all possible proofs of her lawful and honorable birth, of his delay in putting forth her claim through his absence at a distant mining camp and consequent ignorance of Lord Lomond's death—as he told all this with calmness, exactness, and an air of scrupulous truth and conviction, Griselda no longer heard. Mind and spirit had had for the moment all they could endure. Little by little she bent towards Lady Phillida, and soon sank altogether into those sisterly, motherly arms. For the second time in her young and healthy life the veil of an enveloping night seemed to have come down over all her senses, and there was a moment's absolute repose.

Of all that followed the girl had no further recollection. As she now sat



brooding by the fire only these few faces stood out against a background of troubled memories. Only these few voices sounded amid the utterances of a confused and haunting dream. She had been ill, for some days afterwards, and when she was able to travel she had left London. Then she had waited, and rested, almost indifferent as to the result. Her tired mind seemed to have grown apathetic, her heart insensible. Lady Phillida surrounded her with love and care, Grayburn was unobtrusively attentive. She herself, while physically well was in a state of nervous convalescence—listless, languid, unable to think or to care, finding a certain satisfaction in material well-being, but otherwise without much emotion of either expectation or regret.

And now that she felt stronger, now that the vigor of her nature had asserted itself again, all came back to her once more. As her eye fell upon the paper in her hands she remembered who and what she was. She was a great lady, head of an ancient race, and mistress of large lands. Honors had come to her not by marriage as to most other women, but by right of blood and birth; she had youth, beauty, wit, wealth,

and whatever else makes for happiness. But that was not all. She was supremely the child of sorrow, born at a moment when her father's soul, stricken by shame, was fleeing to the mercy of its Maker. She had been cradled without tenderness, nursed without pity, and brought up without love. In all this she had never for a moment had a thought of rebellion or complaint. She had been brave and patient, and had waited with girlish hope for the moment when love and honor would offer her whatever good this world had to give. That day had come. The patent of honor was in her hands; the proof of love in heart.

But under the circumstances the irony of life seemed needlessly severe. As Griselda thought of it large tears of self-pity—tears like those of a lonely, sobbing child—rolled down her cheeks and fell in great, salt drops upon the document in which her earthly dignities were attested by the Queen's own hand.

## XII

"May I come in?"

There was a light tap at the door, and Lady Phillida entered without waiting for a response. Her dress was soft and trailing like Griselda's, and with the smile of morning greeting on her lips, and her gray eyes large and soft and bright like those of a woman who has found new joy in life, she seemed to Griselda even younger than when they had first met, now nearly a year ago.

She leaned over the back of the girl's chair and kissed her lightly on the forehead.

"Good morning, dear," she said briskly, going towards the fire and holding out her small, cold hands to the warmth. "I should have been in before only that I had to order dinner. Mr. Grayburn is coming and I've been wondering whether we ought to ask some one else or keep him all to ourselves."

Griselda said nothing. With eyes in which the tears were still shining she looked up at Lady Phillida and wondered how a

woman who had lost the man she devotedly loved could, years afterwards, still keep the fresh pink bloom upon her cheek, and go on caring for dress and dinners, as though there were anything left to live for.

"It will be dull for you with only us two old folks," Lady Phillida went on without turning round, and with hands still outstretched towards the cheerful flame. "Suppose we were to ask that young Mannering—you liked him—or Major Dromhead?"

"Oh, not for me," Griselda gasped.

"Then who, dear? Tredegar is in town, and may be doing nothing——"

"No one, please, please, Lady Phillida," the girl cried with a sob. "I couldn't endure it indeed. I couldn't talk——"

Lady Phillida turned round and looked at her slowly and critically.

"You've been crying," she said. "And you haven't eaten your breakfast."

Then her eye fell on the paper with its bright red seals. She looked at it for a moment without speaking; and then, with awe-stricken interrogation on every feature, she bent to look into the girl's face.

"Griselda!" she whispered, pointing at the document. "Is it——?"

"Yes," said the girl, sobbing again, and with the tears coursing down her cheeks.

Lady Phillida took the sheet and slowly read the few formal sentences. Then she threw herself on her knees and clasped Griselda in her arms.

"Oh, my dear, my dear!" she cried. "What can I say to you? I was sure it would come. They couldn't have decided otherwise. And yet I scarcely dared hope. What joy! What news for Mr. Grayburn! We must wire him to come at once."

"He is coming," Griselda sobbed. "He said so last night."

"So much the better."

The two women kissed each other and Griselda went on weeping, her head on her friend's shoulder.

"Stop crying," Lady Phillida cried, at length, springing to her feet, and beginning to move excitedly about the little room. "Stop crying, and tell me if I look well enough to receive Mr. Grayburn on such a joyful occasion, in this old thing, or ought I to put on the new gray. No, on second thoughts I won't. I will leave the honors to you to-day, and in the gray I might out-shine you. Griselda," she cried, seizing the

girl's head between her hands, and turning the dark, tear-bedimmed eyes upward towards her own, "do you realize that it is all over, that we have won? I don't, I can't; at least not yet. I wish Mr. Grayburn would come. I think I hear a hansom."

She hurried to the window and looked out.

"No," she continued, "it isn't at our door." Then, coming back to the fire and throwing out her arms with a French-like gesture, "Griselda, my dear Griselda, just think of what you are. You don't take it in. We cannot yet. A countess in your own right—the only one in the Three Kingdoms since old Lady Ayrshire died. It is better than being a duchess, than being a princess even. A man-peer is commonplace; so is a man-peer's wife. But a woman-peer is everything that is picturesque. Even an old witch of a woman like Lady Ayrshire had round her a certain halo easily visible to the eye of faith; but when it is you, with your looks and air and money—oh, what a chance, what luck, what a position! You will sign your name *Lomond*, you know, just like a man."

"I don't mean to take the title," Griselda said weakly, drying her eyes. "I

hate it. I shall call myself Griselda Grant as before."

"Nonsense, my dear," Lady Phillida said, heartily, "you won't do anything of the sort. It wouldn't be legal. It wouldn't be allowed."

"I can't call myself by the name of which I have robbed another."

"Oh, you are thinking of him, are you?"

"I can't help it."

"Naturally, dear, you are sorry for him now, though that has not seemed to me your mental attitude during the last six months. Still you can afford to be generous to a vanquished rival, especially out of such abundance as yours."

"I am more than sorry."

"So am I. Dear Lady Glenorchie has been very disagreeable towards me ever since our little declaration of hostilities at Ascot. I don't suppose we shall ever be friends again. I don't see how we can be. But I bear her no malice, I assure you. I couldn't if I would, now that your success has so amply avenged us. If I dared I should go to Tunbridge Wells and pay her a visit of condolence. Yes, I can truthfully say as you do that I am more than sorry for



them both; but we mustn't let our sympathy lead us into anything absurd, as it would, my dear, if you didn't bear your title."

"How can I bear it," the girl cried almost fiercely, "when he has had to give it up? In my mind it can never be anything but his. If I were to take all that this paper gives me I should feel that I were calling myself by his name and spending his money and living in his house without being married—Oh, I couldn't, Lady Phillida, I couldn't, I couldn't. I shall go back to America. When I am dead there will be nobody to stand any longer between all this and him. No, no, I can't do that either. I forgot. I'm hemmed in."

She sprang to her feet, and only Lady Phillida's quick hand saved the fatal document from falling into the fire. The girl began to pace nervously up and down the little room, according to her habit when overwrought or excited. The older woman looked at her curiously, a new idea of the situation dawning in her mind.

"I have been a fool," she said to herself. "I should have understood this long ago. I thought I had some knowledge of human

nature, but there is always something left to learn."

"My dear child," she said aloud, "you want your breakfast. You will feel better when you have eaten something."

"I can't eat," Griselda said impatiently, turning on her steps like a captive animal in a cage.

"The coffee is stone cold," Lady Phillida said, tapping the coffee-pot, "so is the toast, so is the egg. I will get you something hot. It will never do for Mr. Grayburn to find you like this. He will think me a very incompetent mother to his child."

When she left the room Griselda continued her walk, making no further effort to conceal her emotion, beating her hands against her sides, and moaning softly as if in physical pain. Presently Lady Phillida returned bearing the tray which she herself had arranged. Silver, china, and linen were all exquisite and inviting; and the kind woman affectionately forced Griselda to sit down and eat.

"Now, tell me the truth," Lady Phillida said, seating herself opposite Griselda who tried to sip her coffee, "tell me the truth.

Why are you so unhappy? There is no need to hide anything from me."

"I don't think I can talk of it, dear Lady Phillida."

"You must talk of it. It will do you good."

"There is so much. There are so many things."

"Then we will take them one by one."

"They are too involved and entangled."

"Then we will unravel them."

"And besides you couldn't help me. No one can help me."

"I could advise, perhaps."

"There is no advice that can be given me, and none that I could take."

"Then I might comfort you."

"Not yet. Later, perhaps, but I am not ready for comfort yet."

Griselda had regained something of her composure and spoke in her usual decisive and incisive way.

"I am not patient of mysteries," Lady Phillida said, after a moment's reflection. "Some people like their atmosphere, and perhaps you are one, Griselda dear. For my part I live in the clear and open and I think it the only healthy air to breathe."

"I am not concealing anything from you," Griselda said gently. "But my troubles are of the kind which no one can help me to bear."

"They are troubles which spring largely from remorse? Isn't that true?"

"Yes," Griselda assented, looking into the depths of her coffee cup as though into the lake of black despair.

"Of remorse towards poor Nigel?" Lady Phillida went on.

"Yes," Griselda said again.

"I am not afraid of asking impertinent questions at the proper time," Lady Phillida continued. "In what you feel at this moment remorse is only one element?"

Griselda flushed but did not reply.

"You are a clever actress," Lady Phillida said, smiling. "I thought that was all over and gone. You really had made me believe that you were mistaken in thinking that you cared——"

"I wish I had been."

"Dear child," the older woman said with affection beaming in her eyes, "how wrong you are not to talk to me frankly! I have been through all this so often with other girls. There is an old saying that love will

find the way. It is like water; you may turn it from its channel, or you may dam it up; but it forces its passage just the same. Love is the most irrepressible power on earth. It bends circumstances to its will, and turned from its object in one way, will get to it by another. As Sainte Beuve says, '*L'amour est un grand recommenceur*,' which is true in a great many senses. It gives persistence and perseverance to the most easily discouraged, and as long as it exists the very weakest of us is brave. I said that it was like water, but it is also like fire, in that when you think it smothered it is only smouldering, and that at the very moment when it seems extinguished in your heart it bursts out into a sudden flame. Griselda dear, I know all about it. There are none of its moods from joy to jealousy that I have not lived through. Trust me. Tell me. Let me be your mother, your sister, your woman-friend, anything that one sympathetic understanding heart can be to another. Tell me all about it. You can tell me anything. If it were strange it wouldn't surprise me, if it were sin it would not shock me—coming from you. Only don't shut me out from what is most essentially your

life, because—because I care for you so much, and through you my life has in more ways than one begun to be glad again."

Griselda, as Lady Phillida spoke, looked into the gray eyes out of which all the hardness so often there was gone, while in its place a strange new light was shining—steady, strong, and tender, like the light of love for some one who is more than friend.

"Yes, I will tell you," Griselda said, speaking firmly, with a touch of hardness in her tone. "You will despise me, but I will tell you everything. I will keep nothing back. I love one man as I am capable of loving. You know whom. I love him in such a way as to have no thought left but for him—no heart left but for him—no life left but for him. This is not exaggeration. This is truth. I have given him all I have and am—all for which my being has capacity. This for one man. And I am going soon, to-morrow perhaps, to-day for aught I know, to marry another. There; I have told you. Is it enough?"

'Already?'

The word, spoken softly in a whisper of

astonishment, escaped from Lady Phillida as it had from Glenorchie six months ago.

"Already," Griselda said, in the same hard tone.

"Who is it," Lady Phillida asked, her wondering eyes fixed upon Griselda's.

"Mr. Grayburn," said the footman, throwing the door open.

They could hear the new-comer taking off his overcoat in the hall below.

"Who is it?" Lady Phillida whispered again when the servant had withdrawn.

"He is coming," Griselda whispered back. "He is on the stairs. I am going to marry him."

They were looking hard each at the other. As Griselda spoke she saw the color fade from Lady Phillida's cheek like the after-glow from a peak of snow. The face which an instant ago was young and bright became suddenly haggard and blanched, while the light in the eyes went out. With the flash of instinctive perception Griselda knew the reason why.

It seemed an eternity that they sat gazing thus, leaning across the table towards each other, white and wide-eyed with horror,



while the man's footstep resounded on the stair.

"No, no, no," Griselda whispered. "It can't be that. Say it is not that."

Lady Phillida nodded her confession.

"It is that," she said aloud, with a gesture indicative of fatalistic acceptance of the fact. "It is that. Why should I say no?"

Making such an effort as is possible only to the experienced woman of the world, Lady Phillida braced herself, rose, and with a smile upon her ashen lips went forward, hand outstretched, to greet Grayburn at the door.

### XIII

As she crossed the room Lady Phillida had a distinct recollection of the moment when, fifteen years before, the physician had told her that her husband could not live. She had the same sense now of being stunned by the unexpected, of being unable to think or to understand. And yet the greater circumstance was for the moment hidden by the less.

"I must get through these few minutes somehow," she told herself. "Then I can let it all come upon me later."

So she smiled, and taking Grayburn's hand, said with an exaggerated gaiety:

"See, the conquering hero comes! We have been like the mother of Sisera for at least half an hour."

"Is that why you are so pale?" he asked, holding her hand and looking at her almost anxiously.

"Hope deferred always maketh the heart sick," she replied. "But we have reason to be pale. Just look at Griselda."

The girl had risen, and was standing by the table, white-faced, white-robed, her left hand clasping mechanically the rolled paper to her breast, and her large dark eyes dilating. As Grayburn entered she felt that she was face to face with fate.

He advanced and kissed her tenderly on the forehead, taking the document from her hand.

"You too are pale," he said. "But I know why. It isn't strange. Things like this don't come every day."

"You know?" Griselda asked.

"Yes. Little Tredegar, of the Home Office, told me it had been sent to Windsor for the Queen's signature. He said it would probably come to-day. Let us look at it."

Lady Phillida watched him as he read, noting his coolness, simplicity, and lack of undue elation.

"He is a man!" she said to herself, as she had said a hundred times during the last six months, but now with a sudden anguished throbbing in her heart.

"I am going to ring for Ellis to take away the breakfast-tray," she said cheerfully, as Grayburn laid the document down. "Then

I will leave you young people to your various felicities."

"You won't join in our hymn of victory?" Grayburn asked, as she touched the electric button.

"Not now," she answered, laughing, and going towards the door. "But to-night at eight we shall expect you to a feast of fat things full of marrow and wines on the lees, worthy of the day when the king comes to his own. Au revoir till then."

"If not before," Grayburn called after her as she went down the stairs.

Griselda re-seated herself. Grayburn stood with his back to the fire, with the air of a man who is at home.

"We really owe all to her," he said, when Ellis had taken away the tray and closed the door. "If that is saying too much we at least owe more to her than to any one outside ourselves. What a creature she is! I have always had the highest possible ideal of what a woman could be, and she comes up to it."

"Why don't you marry her, then?" Griselda thought. "If I were to work for that? It would be happiness to her, and what a release for me!"

But at the last idea her sense of honesty revolted.

"No," she went on to herself, "it would be disloyal. I should be striving not for her good but my own. It would be like buying a thing and then trying to shuffle out of payment. I told him I would not shrink from the price, and I must keep my word. He has been faithful to his part of the contract, and I must be so to mine."

"In a case like ours," Grayburn continued, "it isn't enough to have the law only on your side; you must have the prophets as well. Lady Phillida stood for them. How she worked for us among her numberless relations! Without her we should have seemed like interlopers and newly-rich nobodies. The sympathy would have been all for the Glenorchie faction, whose possession would have given them not only nine points of the law, but ninety-nine points of public opinion. Lady Phillida turned that tide for us. Even though she didn't quite believe in us at first she stood by us like a hero, and was ready to fight for friendship when she couldn't fight for faith. And so to-day, instead of being in the public eye like Richard III., dethroning the rightful

king, we are like Charles II., brought home again. It is in all the morning papers. Our progress is regarded not as an usurpation but a restoration; and we owe that point of view to Lady Phillida. Oh, I have no illusions on that subject! I know that Uncle Perthshire and Brother Hull haven't sided with us for our beauty. They haven't invited you to their castles and put me up at inaccessible clubs because we are their long-lost affinities. There has been method even in their sanity. If it is too late for Uncle Perthshire and Brother Hull to marry for money they like to go where money is. And the money is here, dear Lady Lomond, in your pocket and mine."

Griselda flushed to hear herself called by the name. Once she had dreamed of bearing it as Nigel's wife. It seemed impossible that it should be hers otherwise.

"How does it feel to be called by a high-sounding title? I merely bring it in incidentally, Lady Lomond, in order that you may get used to it. But, as I was saying, we have practically bought the Duke of Perthshire and the Earl of Hull and most of our other devoted adherents, not by check nor by money down, but by the mere sight

and scent of gold. That is all right. I don't blame them, and I don't care. Uncle Perthshire and Brother Hull are only rungs on the ladder by which you and I are going to mount right up to the top of European and American life."

Griselda, on whose face the sudden flush had died away, made an impatient gesture and tried to speak, but Grayburn stopped her.

"Yes, yes," he said, "I know you don't care for all that, but I do. Our lives have been so different. You don't know anything of the stress and the fever and the purpose to succeed that I've had to live in. You've been like a flower sheltered and fed with sunshine that has had nothing to do but await its time for blooming. Oh, you've had no doubt your days of wind and rain, about which I know nothing, but your life on the whole has been that of a flower in fine weather. Mine has been like a volcano, quiescent during long years, so that people have called it extinct, but always burning within, furiously gathering force, and adding fire to fire till now it is ready to burst forth and make a blaze and a noise in the world."

"What do you want to do?" Griselda asked



coldly, and with a lack of sympathy to which Grayburn paid no attention. All this ardent, and, to her serious mind, unworthy ambition, was new and painful on the part of the simple, resolute man, who had always seemed old and passionless to her, and whom she had revered.

"What am I going to do? I don't know. So much is possible that I have only marked out the first few steps, but I will indicate them if your ladyship will give me your attention."

Grayburn laughed as he saw Griselda flush again, and drawing a small chair to him sat down astride on it, close beside her.

"Look at me, Griselda," he began, "look at me well. I have iron-gray hair and an iron-gray beard and moustache. There are wrinkles round my eyes and my face shows the signs of exposure to much bad weather, and more hard work. I don't wonder that you always think of me as a veritable and venerable patriarch. And yet I am comparatively young. I am forty-seven. I was twenty-six the year that you were born."

"That seems old to me," Griselda said, with the unconscious cruelty of youth,

"You were older when I was born than I am now."

"But I am not old," Grayburn insisted smilingly. "And yet I have accomplished much. At an age when most men are still sowing the seed of life I have only to put out my hand and pluck its fruit. A newspaper man would say that I had every prospect of a brilliant future before me; and I mean to have it. You ask me how; and as yet I can't precisely tell you; not because the way is obscure, but because there are so many ways that I hesitate between them. After twenty years of repression and starvation with regard to everything beautiful and great, I want to open my arms to all that civilization can offer and money can buy and splendid position can command. I am not the grave and hoary heavy father which your childish, affectionate fancy conjured up. I am only a starved man with a huge appetite for life, and a fiery craving for all that it can give me to enjoy——"

"Except love," Griselda could not resist saying.

"Oh, love, love!" Grayburn laughed with a wide gesture of the hand and arm. "Love is always a woman's song; but if that had

had a place in a life like mine I should never have been where I am to-day. I abjured love when I abjured drink on the day when I saw where they had both led poor Inversnaid. Forgive me," he said hastily, putting his hand on hers. "I am not saying anything unkind. I mean only that love as you women understand it has since that day had no significance for me, and, please God, never will."

"The sentiment has the virtue of novelty as uttered to the woman who is to be your wife."

"Let us be sensible, Griselda dear," he said, in a tone of gentle protest. "You know as well as I do that what I offer you is much better than so-called love or any other idle song. You are now in a position where you will be the object of every presentable fortune-hunter in the two hemispheres. You are dangerously independent to make your own choice, while your want of experience would render you an easy victim. Ask Lady Phillida, ask any other reasonable person, and every one will tell you that not the least of all your good fortune is that you should be bound to me. You know what my affection is; you know

what my protection is; you have tested them both. You know that with me you run no risks whatever. Marriage, they say, is a lottery; but you and I know that in it there are two prizes and no blanks. What can you ask for more?"

"Nothing," Griselda said impassively. "I ask nothing at all."

"Then don't speak to me like that," Grayburn went on in the same tone of kindly expostulation. "I don't think I deserve it. You have promised to marry me; and I have given you my help on the strength of your word. Do you wish to draw back now?"

"No, no," Griselda said hurriedly. "Never. I said I would give you your price, and I will do it."

"Price is not a pretty word when a man has worked for a woman for twenty years as I have worked for you. Nevertheless, I accept it; but I should like to say just this. In business, when a man has bought a house or a horse or a mine, as the case may be, he sometimes feels on second thoughts that he has bid too high. But when the day of reckoning comes he puts his check down in a simple, straightforward, honest fashion. If it costs him an effort he conceals it, and

stands up to his bargain with the best grace he can assume. He neither thinks nor tries to make others think that he is the victim of unfair advantage. We call that honor between man and man; is it too much to look for it between man and woman? You will excuse me, dear child, if I speak gravely on a day that should be all smiles, but I want things to be clearly understood. I have meant for years past to marry you; and when I saw that you were unwilling I used such means as were at my command to ensure, to ensnare perhaps, your consent. It was a moment when you were desperate, when you saw that to do what you wanted would cost dear. I have been in precisely the same position many a time; and I have paid dear. It came high perhaps, but it was worth it, and I didn't complain. In the long run I saw that it was cheap. On the day you promised to marry me the help that I could give you seemed worth the price, as you call it, that I asked you to pay. Of that help you have since reaped the benefits, and will continue to reap them as long as you live. But I cannot honestly say that your attitude to me has been either as gracious or as generous as mine to you. From that day

to this I have allowed your promise to rest very lightly on you. I have spoken of it rarely to you, and never to any one else, not even to Lady Phillida——”

“I’ve told her,” Griselda said.

“That is quite right. But I feel obliged to say that your undisguised air of repugnance when the subject of our marriage has come up is something which I neither understand nor can continue to endure. I have no wish to drag you like a second Zenobia in golden chains. I am not going to ill-treat you nor neglect you. You talk of love as though it were the only essential, but your own experience is proof of its untrustworthy and passing nature. A few months ago you thought you loved a young man whom you now despise. Suppose you had married him? You would have done so with all the orange-flowers blooming and the nuptial trumpets blowing, as though the object of life had been won. And what should you have been to-day? A woman who despises her husband, while God knows what the husband would have begun to feel towards his wife.”

“Don’t,” Griselda pleaded faintly.

“No, I won’t go on with that. You can

always paint a fancy picture black. I speak only of what you yourself have given me to understand, and I cite it as a case in point. The fact that you loved, or thought you loved, a young man less than a year ago does not prevent his being objectionable to you now. And therefore I contend that a marriage of reason, such as ours would be, ought not to inspire you with the horror which you never hesitate to display. For myself I cannot understand it. Our interests have always been identical. Your life has been linked with mine ever since you were born. What more unnatural than that they should be torn asunder now? But, I ask you again, are you seeking to elude your promise? or do you mean to keep it like a Jephthah's daughter or an Iphigenia bewailing her sad lot but having no choice but to yield? If so speak plainly. It is only just to me."

They looked at each other in silence, Grayburn's steel-blue eyes keen with question and determination. As Griselda gazed at him she silently acknowledged the justice of what he said, and knew that she must try to accept her fate, if not with cheerfulness, at least with dignity and resignation.



"You are quite right," she said, in a low voice. "I have been lacking in honor. I have been neither grateful nor just. I beg your pardon for it, and will try to be different. Believe me, I am not blind to all your goodness to me, but I am and have been most unhappy. But to-day I suppose is the beginning of a new life for me, and I am going to try to make it so. I promise you never again to give you cause for just complaint. I will do my best as long as I live to make you a good wife, to carry out your wishes and to assume towards our marriage your own point of view."

She smiled as she spoke, and held out her hand. If the smile was forced, and if the words had cost her an immense effort, Grayburn did not perceive it. He was not accustomed to go behind and search the motives of what suited him.

"That is your true self," he said, taking her hand and smiling also. "That is the Griselda whom I recognize."

"I want only to say in self-defence," she continued, "what perhaps you will not understand, that it is the very strength of my affection for you as father and brother and all in all in my life that makes it hard

for me to think of you as my husband. It would be hard in any case, but it is especially so after what took place last year."

"It doesn't matter whether I understand that or not," he said, with a complete return to the happy tone in which he had spoken at the beginning of the conversation, "as long as I know that it is the case. Since it is so we will hurry nothing, we will hasten slowly, and take our time; which brings me back to what we were talking about a few minutes ago. You asked me what I propose to do. Well, the first thing is that which I shall tell you last. Secondly, and most important, I propose that my wife as *grande dame* shall have a position inferior to none in Europe or America, that she shall have everything that is worth having, and do everything that is worth doing, and know every one who is worth knowing, and be admired and honored and sought out as she is worthy to be. With her rank, her youth, her beauty, her goodness, her intelligence, her wealth, she shall have more than can be commanded by any queen."

At his enthusiastic, boy-like tone Griselda smiled in spite of herself.

"I am not capable of that," she said.

"Lomond Lodge," he went on, "shall be the most hospitable home in England. House of Tulloch shall again become one of the grandest residences in Scotland. This shall be your setting, the background of your state; where I shall come less as master than as guest. But this is not all," he added, with a sudden change of tone. "I shall be no prince-consort, and play no second part. If you are to stand for beauty, I shall be here for use. I have great dreams, Griselda, practical dreams, I think, and I mean to do my best to carry them out. Our home is to be in two continents. We must not forget that while you are Scotch and I am English we are both, in a sense Americans. With a great position and great wealth we shall have great opportunities, and especially for the work which lies nearest of all to my heart, the unification in sentiment and for all the purposes of civilization of the Anglo-Saxon people. This is big talk but I think it can be justified. I have bought a house in New York—a very beautiful house—and we shall live almost as much there as here. But even this is not all."

He stopped and his expression changed

from enthusiasm to gravity. When he spoke his tone was lower, and round his mouth the lines of determined purpose were more marked and strong.

"I am going to attain the end for which I have toiled as long as I have toiled for you. I am going back to the home whence I was driven out and I am going to make it mine."

"Oh!" Griselda breathed. She knew that he was touching on the most sacred subject of his life.

"My brother Paul came to see me yesterday," he said. "It was a curious meeting. The last time we saw each other was twenty-three years ago. I think I played the part of Esau yesterday with magnanimity; at least I tried to do so."

"And was he Jacob?"

"In some respects, though he was the elder son. He did not supplant me, he only turned me out of doors. It was after my father and mother died and he had come into Grayburn Hall and the little property. He had just been married to a parson's daughter from Enderby. I was spoken of as having gone to the devil, which I suppose was true. At any rate I had spent my last shilling. I had gambled away the little

that my father left me, and one day at Lincoln I found myself literally without food, shelter, or a penny in my pocket. It was twenty miles to Grayburn Hall, and I tramped it. It was about nine when I arrived, and the house was all lit up. Paul and his wife were giving a little dinner, the first after their marriage. At the door the servant who opened to me was curiously embarrassed; he had evidently received orders. He would speak to Mr. Paul, he said. Presently Mr. Paul came out. 'You can't come in here,' were the words with which he began, and the rest was according to that tenor. I crawled back to Lincoln more dead than alive, having eaten nothing since the day before, and lived on dust and ashes until I received a loan from Inversnaid. Shortly after that an old aunt died and left me five hundred pounds, with which I went to America. But I have never forgotten Paul, nor the night when I was turned from my father's door and the house where I was born."

"How does he seem now?" Griselda asked.

"Rather gray and faded out, not much of a man. His wife, too, who came with him, is a poor colorless creature. They have had

a good deal of trouble. Their only son is dead and both their daughters have married badly, and Grayburn Hall is in the market. The next place to it is also in the market, and the next place to that. I am going to buy all three and rebuild the old house on a splendid scale, so that the name of Grayburn may take its proper place in Lincolnshire. I know every hedged lane and flat far-reaching field from Grayburn Cross to Winterby. It is to be all mine, Griselda. The land on which my fathers lived is where I shall live and where I shall die. You don't understand that joy perhaps, as you said just now that I couldn't understand your sorrow, but it is a very living one. It is the passion of my soul—the passion for the place where I was born and to which I am going back again.”

“I can understand it,” Griselda said, “even though I cannot share it. I am very glad for your sake that what you desire so much can be so easily carried out.”

“Now let us brighten up a little,” Grayburn said, with another of his sudden changes. “These are some of my purposes. my first purposes, but not the very first. I said that I would make that proposition last,

and it is a matter in which you and Lady Phillida must decide. We are in no hurry to be married, are we?"

"That depends on you."

"Well, I am not quite ready. I want first to accustom you to the idea. I want to brush away the recollections of the past few months. After so much strain we need a little pleasure. Therefore I suggest that we should all three go away as soon as possible from cold, wet England and look for change and warmth in Italy. How does that strike you? Or would you prefer the Riviera?"

"No, not the Riviera. There would be too many people there. I should like to go to Italy."

"Would it really please you?"

"Very much, if Lady Phillida would come. I doubt that, however."

"I shall persuade her," Grayburn said with confidence. "She is too good a friend in woe not to stand by us in weal."

Griselda brightened visibly. The suggestion to go abroad was like a reprieve. She had no hope left of ultimate escape, but even a few weeks' respite was something gained.

They talked a little longer of dates and



arrangements and routes of travel; and when Grayburn at last went away the girl was, if not happier, soothed and softened, perhaps not reconciled, but more resigned.

When left alone she remained sitting still, watching the dying fire—now thinking, now praying, nerving herself for renunciation, and whispering half aloud at the thought of her past hopes, "Good-bye, Good-bye."

## XIV

"I wonder if there is any one here?" Grayburn called, as he saw, in descending, the drawing-room door ajar, and pushed it open.

Lady Phillida was there, sitting at a window, looking into the broad street, but seeing nothing.

She was passing through the bitterest moment which her life of ups and downs had known. In her fifteen years of widowhood she had received many a hard knock from without; but this was from within. Neither sorrow, slander, nor slights had ever left her a prey to her own self-reproach. She had come out of all three with head erect, and conscience clear, firmer and prouder and more determined than ever to do what she thought right and hold her own. She had gone her way, and had prized her independence; if she had had any weakness it was in what she called her knowledge of the world. Now her whole soul lay bare, scourged and tortured by the sense of having made the most humiliating of all

mistakes. She had allowed herself to fancy, to believe, that a man had cared for her, to whom she had been after all nothing but a useful assistant and from time to time a sympathetic friend. In a schoolgirl it would have been pitiable; in her it was unpardonable. She had seen him day by day, she had heard his words, she had seen his looks, she had taken note of all the little nothings by which the heart betrays itself, she had had every means of judging, and yet she had made this mistake.

She had been not only self-deluded, but self-ensnared. She had given what she thought she received. She had allowed the heart which she had supposed too disillusioned ever to be deceived again to respond to the call which had not been made to it. She had permitted herself to dream dreams and build up hopes; and the knowledge of life on which she grounded her pride had counselled her nothing. Neither the age which she avowed nor the experience which she vaunted had saved her from the most crushing of all blows to her self-esteem.

How had it been possible? How had she been so self-deceived?

With cheeks flaming, and hard gray eyes staring vacantly into the street she went back over the path which had brought her to this moment of mortification and folly. She remembered the first meeting with Grayburn on the lawn at Lomond Lodge when she had not had the chance to do more than speak to him. She remembered her satisfaction when on the same evening he had been appointed to take her to dinner. She had been curious as to him, he suspicious as to her.

The details of their conversation returned to her, and she recalled her sense of pleasure in having again met one whom she knew to be a man, so different from the carpet-knights who annoyed her with their attentions and the wealthy mercantile widowers who offered her their hands. Here was a man who had really lived and was ready to live on, who had done much and would do more, who had seen good days and evil, who had drunk sweet wine and bitter, and who was more than ever eager, vigorous, and virile, full of fire and hope. Strong but not stupid, simple but inscrutable, self-centred perhaps but not precisely selfish, he was to Lady Phillida the very type of the master-

man who hews his way through circumstance. To him a proud woman could abnegate her pride and submit her independence.

After the evening at Ascot, and the moment which they jestingly called the Earthquake, he and she had been drawn together by a common care and a common interest. Griselda, though the most important figure in their group, gradually fell into the background, and they two undertook together the management of her cause. Grayburn came soon to ask Lady Phillida's advice and to depend upon her help. Where he brought determination she added tact; and his forcefulness of action was refined and perfected by her knowledge of social detail and dignified procedure. He lent himself to her influence, and submitted to her charm. He was at once an apt pupil and a dominant director, learning what she had to teach, but subjecting her to his will.

Their intercourse had always been frank, simple, and straightforward, always natural and necessary under the circumstances in which they found themselves. Their conversation had turned not on hearts, but on practical matters of law. If then there had been a mistake, Lady Phillida admitted, the

fault was not his. He had done nothing and said nothing to mislead her. He had only looked into her eyes with that steel-blue gaze of mingled comprehension and compulsion which she had taken as meaning something else. Now she could almost laugh out in scorn of her own fatuity. She felt as if she must tell the tale abroad, publishing it as a bitter joke against herself.

She heard his footstep as he descended from Griselda's room. She wished he would come in. She wanted to see him, to come face to face with him, to defy her own weakness, to prove to herself how little cause she had for such egregious error.

"Yes, come in," she said at once, as Grayburn entered. "Do come here and look at this grotesque monkey begging for his organ-grinder."

"Am I bothering you?" he asked as he cast an indifferent glance into the street, and then sat down on the broad window-seat, close beside her chair.

"Not in the least," she answered with that air of briskness which practice had made it easy to assume. "I was doing nothing—only thinking."

"Pleasant thoughts, I hope?"

"Mixed. At my age the honey has always a little taste of wormwood."

"And at mine," he said, "we are only too thankful when the wormwood has a little taste of honey."

"Oh, you have eaten your blackbread before the white, as the French say. That is the best of all good fortune. With most of us it is the reverse. Of all the men I know you are the most to be congratulated."

"I've come for congratulations——"

"Yes, I know, Griselda has just told me."

"And what do you say?"

His keen eyes were on her and a half smile was playing round his lips. She forced herself to meet his gaze with her own frankest and steadiest regard. The slight tremor in her voice was not more than the occasion justified.

"What does one say when the man one honors most marries the woman one loves more than any other in the world? You know what I wish you both before I utter it."

"Yes, I do know," he said softly, leaning towards her and taking in his hand the tassel of her long silken girdle. "No one ever had a friend like you."



"Don't say that," she pleaded, fearing to lose her self-control. She could endure indifference, but not that gentle, earnest tone.

"I will say it," he persisted. "The time has come when we must thank you. No, not precisely that. One does not thank another when one owes a debt like ours to you."

"You owe me nothing, nothing at all," she said hastily. "I beg you not to say so."

"We will not dispute about words and terms. The essential only is important."

"There is no essential——"

"On your side perhaps. But on mine there is that which is essential and all-consequential——"

"You forget that what little I have done I had to do. I am like the unprofitable servant; it was my duty; and I have received my fee."

"I wasn't thinking so much of what you've done for us as of what you've been to us."

"Ah, there the discussion is on my own ground. I admit that for conscious actions, thanks more or less formal, or more or less heartfelt, are in order, if not positively due.

But for what one is one deserves no thanks at all. What one is, one is unconsciously. In giving of oneself one gives without effort, because one cannot help oneself——”

“I am not speaking generally or philosophically,” Grayburn said, quietly putting a stop to her attempt to lead the conversation away from herself. “I am speaking of a particular case and a very special person. And yet I am only groping my way, as it were. I am trying to find out where I stand and what I ought to do. Let me state the case. When a woman of high rank, great beauty, and the ablest and noblest mind——”

“If you mean me,” she laughed, trying to speak flippantly, “that has been said so often by callow gentlemen from Oxford, that it sounds now like the prelude to an old-fashioned song.”

“Perhaps it is an old-fashioned song,” he continued with the same quiet earnestness, looking up into her eyes, “but I mean to sing it to the end. When this lady gives me help when I need it, friendship when I stand alone, trust when very few believe in me——”

“Then you take it as a wedding present,”

she said, springing up; turning her back on him she began to poke the fire vigorously. "There, there," she cried, "you've said enough and to spare. When I want a reward for my services I will let you know what it is. Meantime I can think it over during my holiday."

"What holiday?" he asked, rising and following her to the fire-place.

"I feel something like an old nurse," she said, "from whom they are taking her baby. I can't look for another place just yet. I mean to take a rest."

"I've thought of that," he said.

"That's kind, Perhaps you mean to give me an extra week's wages with my character?"

"No, but I thought you might like to stay on and make a little visit in the family."

"Quite like one of themselves, I suppose you mean?"

"Oh no, a great deal better."

"I fear the metaphor is getting beyond me," she said, putting the poker back into its place, and dusting the tips of her fingers one against the other.

"Figures of speech are likely to be indefinite," he rejoined, "and so I will come

to facts. I think you and Griselda both need a change. I propose to carry you off to Italy."

"I couldn't possibly go," she said with decision.

"Why not?"

"First because I am under a vow neither to eat bread nor drink water, so to speak, until I have been seen in half a dozen different country houses, all the way between here and York."

"That's no reason," he said. "You've put off visits of that sort——"

"Until they can be put off no longer."

"That doesn't weigh with me at all."

"Nor with me," she avowed with a frank laugh, as though she had nothing whatever to conceal. "My true reason is that a sort of mother-in-law on a honeymoon, as I should be, is always in the way."

"It isn't to be a honeymoon, at least not at first. Griselda doesn't want to be married yet; and I myself feel that the wedding would come best just before our return to England. So your true reason also is an insufficient one."

"But I have a truer reason still."

"Which is?"

"You had really better take no for an answer, with my most grateful thanks," she said, laughing, and beginning to re-arrange the objects on the mantel-piece.

"That has never been my policy in life, and least of all just now."

"You persist in probing the very secrets of my heart?"

"I do."

"Then, I can't accept your amiable invitation because I don't want to go."

Grayburn said nothing, and so she turned and looked at him. For the first time since she had known him he had the air of being hurt.

"You mean that you are tired of us," he said at last.

"Not exactly."

"Then what?"

"Only that the best of friends must part."

"Not in every case."

"Perhaps not in every case, but certainly in this."

"I fail to see why."

"Hasn't it occurred to your mind that when Griselda is married to you she will no longer have need of me?"

"It hasn't," he said simply. "On the

contrary neither Griselda nor I could do without you."

"That's nonsense. Please don't say it. It is so ridiculous that it almost hurts me."

"Besides Griselda and I are not married yet. I never thought that you would leave us before——"

"I couldn't go traveling. I might stay with her here; I mean she might stay with me. But I couldn't go with you——"

Lady Phillida stopped suddenly. She was almost betraying herself, and certainly showing moral cowardice. There was no reason why she should not go to Italy. The only motive for saying no was fear—fear to meet this man, fear of being with him day by day, fear of his outspoken appreciation, fear of the torture of his friendship. It was a new accusation of self; a fresh humiliation.

"Then we will not go," said Grayburn. "Griselda will be disappointed."

Then something else awoke in Lady Phillida—the almost maternal love for the girl whom she would sacrifice to the impulse to find secrecy and shelter for herself. She saw what this journey would mean to Griselda, a relief, a breathing space, a

moment for preparation; and who could tell what else?

"I'll go," she said to herself. "It will be like eating ashes as it were bread, but I've done that before. Cost what it will, I'll go."

"Of course, if Griselda would be hurt if I didn't go, I might——"

"Do for her sake what you would not do for mine."

Lady Phillida's eyes flashed.

"Is it fair to say that?" she asked.

"It is if I feel it," he answered simply.

"Haven't I given proofs——" she began.

"Yes and no," he interrupted. "When one feels as I do there are never proofs enough."

"You are hard to satisfy."

"Because I have a great hunger."

"For what, pray?"

"For the unknown."

"I am afraid you are getting out of your depth."

"But I can swim."

"I can't," she said laconically. "So let us return to dry land. It is safest there. The particular land of which we were speaking was Italy, was it not?"



"Italy or elsewhere, so long as you come."

"And if I don't?"

"Then we shall not go, as I have already said."

"It is absurd to make your actions dependent upon mine."

"The seasons are always dependent on the sun."

"The fact is," said Lady Phillida with the practical air of stating the situation, "that you and Griselda have a fancy for taking a sort of pre-nuptial wedding trip."

"That is true as far as it goes."

"And you are in search of some one who will satisfy the social demands of the situation."

"Bringing us up to the perfect number, three."

"Then as an act of charity——"

"Charity is always the blessed third with Faith and Hope, and if I remember rightly, the greatest of all."

"And may I ask which grace you impersonate yourself?"

"I clearly stand for Hope; because I know that we three are to be as inseparable as the graces of St. Paul."

"I should rather call that Faith, on the

definition that faith is believing what you know isn't true."

"Then I shall be Faith. I will play as many parts as Bottom the Weaver, if only you will not leave us."

"I will not leave you to the extent of going to Italy with you, and at the wedding giving the bride away. When that is done I shall consider my rôle of Charity at an end."

"Charity never faileth," he said, looking half grateful, half triumphant. "I knew you wouldn't fail us, and you haven't and you won't. Give me your hand upon it; for I end where I began in saying that no man ever had a friend like you."

It was a great relief to Lady Phillida when he went away. Skilled as she was in social dissimulation the air of banter had been difficult to maintain, and before his expressions of sincere, almost affectionate, regard her spirit quailed.

"How can I keep it up?" she asked herself as the street door closed behind him. "I must," she went on with clenched teeth. "For Griselda's sake, I must."

Then slowly, with the gait of a tired woman from whom all courage and buoy-

ancy is gone, she dragged herself upstairs to Griselda's door.

She knocked, but there was no answer. Entering the sitting room she found it empty. Crossing to where the bed-room door stood open, she saw the girl within kneeling at her prayer desk, above which hung a great, white, ivory crucifix.

Griselda turned at the sound of the footstep, but before she had time to rise, Lady Phillida was at her side.

Then clinging to each other, and with convulsive sobs, they continued to kneel on together before the thorn-crowned figure on the Cross.

And yet the little dinner that night was very bright.

"I will show Griselda how to do it," Lady Phillida had said to herself during the day. "I'll show her how our soldiers go singing and smiling into battle, till the smile is fixed and the song forever silenced by the first stray bullet. She is too young yet to know that a woman's pluck is often in being most radiant and gay just at the moment when some great fear is eating all the happiness out of her life, or her heart is in process of breaking. She will see and learn to-night."

So without the aid of artifice, with cheeks glowing with the excitement of the struggle, and with eyes sparkling with the fire of the dominant will within, Lady Phillida renewed that night the beauty which had scarcely begun to wane. She purposely made herself as gorgeous as an exquisite taste would let her, arraying herself in brilliant white, with touches of silver and pale green, and decking herself with diamonds and emeralds on neck and wrists and hands. Griselda, in black with pearls, offered to Lady Phillida the contrast of shade to sunlight, and of dignified youth to magnificent maturity. Grayburn had the air of a man with whom all was going well. For him it was one of those rare moments when a man admits to himself that his success is complete, that his happiness has no flaw in it. Never counting what the attainment of his purpose cost himself he counted still less what it cost to others. Griselda and Lady Phillida had accepted his yoke and had bent to his will; with what amount of effort it never occurred to him to enquire. He did not seek to know; he would not have understood if he had known.

Lady Phillida's poverty was not inconsis-

tent with the possession of much beautiful inherited silver, exquisite china, and fine old wines. The dinner was excellent, the talk bright. Grayburn told amusing stories of adventures in the west; Lady Phillida recounted experiences still more amusing of the social world of London; while Griselda found again her almost forgotten gift of repartee. To her Lady Phillida's courage was heroic; it at once shamed and excited her own. In her friend's phrase, she saw how it was done and did it.

"But," she said to herself as the laugh went round, "was there ever a greater proof of the superiority of man? Here are we two poor women, nominally free and independent, from whom this man has taken all; he has tied us to his chariot wheels and rides triumphantly on, indifferent to, unconscious of, our suffering. And yet we dare not even weep. On the contrary, we feast him, and amuse him, and hide our tears with hollow laughter. We try to make him think that not only do we do his will, but that we do it willingly, and all because he is a man."

Still, she did not rebel; she had not even the courage to go on with the complaint.

At a certain moment Grayburn raised his glass and proposed the health of the most modest of living maidens, the Countess of Lomond. He and Lady Phillida drank it standing. Then Griselda rose and made a little speech, ending by asking all present to rise with her and drink the health of the best of women and the stanchest of friends, Lady Phillida Wimpole. Lady Phillida also spoke and asked the Countess of Lomond to join with her in toasting one who was inclined to use towards them a giant's tyranny with a giant's strength, Mr. Botolph Grayburn. Mr. Botolph Grayburn made no reply to this, but gave a signal to a servant. In response the man brought forward and placed before Grayburn a large leathern casket. There was a moment of solemn silence and suspense. Then opening it he displayed a Countess's coronet in splendid jewels.

The thing was so beautiful, flashing in the light, that neither of the women could repress an exclamation of surprise and admiration.

Grayburn rose and placed it lightly on Griselda's head, who sat now quite still and white, her heart beating wildly with mingled

excitement and pain. Then he stooped and kissed her gently on the brow.

While Lady Phillida fastened the glittering ornament in its place, Grayburn gave another signal. Another casket was brought similar to the first.

"Sit down," he said to Lady Phillida.

Then taking a superb diamond tiara from its case he leaned towards her and placed it on her hair.

"I want you," he whispered, "to accept this with my——"

He did not finish the sentence, for their eyes met. What the omitted word was she was left to guess.

Later in the evening, when Grayburn had gone, Lady Phillida and Griselda stood looking at each other half-mockingly, half-admiringly. Just then Ellis brought a letter which had arrived some time before. It was addressed to the Right Honorable the Countess of Lomond, and was postmarked, Tunbridge Wells.

Griselda took it, turned it round, looked at the coronet in gold on the envelope, and then opened it. It was dated from Rusthall Court that morning.

"Lady Glenorchie," the letter ran, "pre-



sents her compliments to Lady Lomond, and begs the favor of an interview on any day this week in the afternoon."

Griselda read it twice and then handed it to Lady Phillida.

"I will not see her," the girl said.

"You must," the answer came.

## XV

When Lady Glenorchie left Lomond Lodge for her own house at Tunbridge Wells it was with proud outward calm, but hot inward indignation.

"We are not running away," she said to her son, "we are only leaving a fair field to our opponent." And yet in her heart she felt that it was flight.

"We shall come back," she said, "with our right established beyond question."

And yet she was secretly, almost unconsciously, convinced that they should never return.

It was part of her unwilling tribute to Griselda, that in spite of herself Lady Glenorchie admitted the girl's rectitude, courage, and good sense. The hostility between the two had had from the first its root in mutual appreciation. If Griselda, on going to Lomond Lodge, could have analyzed what she felt she would have said:

"Here is an hereditary, fastidious ele-

gance before which I must always seem new and crude, and whose esteem I can never conquer."

Lady Glenorchie had she gone beneath her gentle haughtiness and avowed what she saw there would have said:

"Here is a youth and a poise and a certainty of self before which I must seem faded, and which will push me into the background."

It was like the modern face to face with the out-of-date, or the New World confronting the Old. The bitterest drop of gall which Lady Glenorchie was compelled to drink lay therefore in the fact that the cup was forced on her by Griselda's hand. From any one else she could have better borne it. That she carried herself with dignity, that the tact and grace she displayed in a most difficult situation were praised throughout the Three Kingdoms, that public sympathy was strongly with her son and her even after it was also extended to Griselda, neither concealed nor consoled Lady Glenorchie's own sense of humiliation and defeat. It was the first great personal shock which her protected life had experienced; it was the first time that the hand of cir-

cumstance had been roughly laid upon her.

She did her best to think and to make others think that to a house like hers even an ancient earldom and great wealth could give no increase of honor; they were like works of art added to an already vast collection, acceptable but not essential. She spoke freely on the subject, and in any company—simply, without sensitiveness, but with no affectation of indifference. Her whole outward carriage was that of a woman gentle, serene, and highly-bred. If she made any change whatever it was in going a little more into the world. Exalted sympathy had commanded her to Windsor, whither she had gone. Afterwards she had shown herself in two or three great country houses. Then she had entertained a succession of shooting parties at Glenorchie Castle. Having thus done enough for dignity she withdrew to Tunbridge Wells. Here she could be in solitude; here, like a nun in her cloister, she could wrestle with her conscience in seclusion; here she could try to soothe her soul with reading, meditation, and prayer.

For her battle was not only with her

pride; there was entering on the field the great spiritual warrior called Self-Upbraiding. He seemed at first to come down from London, when, in the late autumn, Nigel, who had returned to his Piccadilly chambers, began his Saturday-to-Monday visits to Rusthall Court. Lady Glenorchie never stopped wondering what her son was nursing in his heart. From the night of Griselda's departure from Lomond Lodge he never spoke of her as of other than a stranger. He had come back from London on the following day pale, grave, and silent; he did not say, but the mother knew, that he had seen Griselda, and that all was definitely over.

Lady Glenorchie had expected from her son some word of reproach, but none had ever been spoken; she had looked for some sign of estrangement, but none had ever come. He was as tender, gentle and devoted as heretofore. If he suffered he said nothing; if his suffering was due to her he was careful she should not suspect it. They spoke freely of Griselda's claim, but never directly of her. Griselda's solicitors communicated to Glenorchie's the nature of the evidence to be put in, and this was fre-

quently discussed at Rusthall Court, but with as little personal reference as possible.

Then gradually Lady Glenorchie knew that her son was dealing gently with her, that he would not have her know to what extent she had spoiled his life and wrecked his happiness.

As time went on they both fell into the habit of speaking as though it were an accepted fact that they should not go back to Lomond Lodge or wear the Lomond honors. This meant that Griselda had been right; and if right that she had intended to act towards them in a spirit of love, consideration, and self-sacrifice. And yet they did not speak of it. Nigel could not, and his mother would not. When she had fully grasped the fact it seemed but to increase the bitterness she felt towards this girl who had not only proved herself strong but good. If the spiritual warrior Self-Upbraiding had but let the matter rest Lady Glenorchie could have encased her conscience in the triple steel of pride, defiance, and indignation; but he would not. He came down from London when Nigel came; he looked out of Nigel's sad blue eyes; he showed himself in Nigel's quiet joyless manner; he

was strongest of all in Nigel's smile, and words of filial love, and thoughtful acts of tenderness.

The son returned to London, but in time the spiritual warrior went away no more. He stayed with the mother, walking with her in the garden, whispering to her in her prayers, coming to her in her dreams.

One day, as the winter wore on, Lady Glenorchie was sitting almost alone in Rust-hall Church. It was a week day, the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul. The voice of the old priest who read was weak and indistinct, and Lady Glenorchie's thoughts were far away. Suddenly it seemed as if a mighty call, tender yet terrible, rang along the aisles: "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."

Lady Glenorchie started, terrified and trembling. Was it only the voice of the old man at the altar? Yes, of course. He had gone on at once with the words:

"And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

She steadied herself, and said:

"I am foolish. It was my imagination. That had nothing to do with me."

But she could not stay in the church.



She went out, and yet could not go home. She crossed the Common and walked as far as the High Rocks before she felt calm enough to face the solitude of her own house and the torture of her thoughts.

The next day was Saturday and Nigel would come down.

"I will ask him to stay with me a few days," she said. "Then this nervousness will pass."

The next day he came. She met him at the door. On the instant when his grave face lit up with the smile of greeting, the strange voice rang out again, not aloud, but in her heart: "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."

This time she paid no heed. Nigel was there with his kind ways and his budget of London news, so that she no longer feared the silence of the house, and the ceaseless questioning of conscience. In her son's company she so soothed and strengthened and defied herself that she entered into a time of what she thought was spiritual peace. She prayed much, and soon considered herself strong.

Then, a fortnight later Nigel came again. It was a few days after the last hearing of

Griselda's case at Westminster. He had had made for his mother a report of the whole proceedings, word for word, so that no detail might be unknown to her.

It was late at night when he arrived, and he was very tired. Almost at once he kissed his mother good-night, leaving the papers with her.

The report was long, but Lady Glenorchie never raised her eyes till it was finished.

"It is conclusive," she said, as she laid it down. "She was right. She has won. We must be brave, but it is useless to deny our humiliation."

Then she prayed for strength to bear the blow she had expected, and all but asked for means and force to pay it back.

That night she woke suddenly, in great terror, with the sense of being haunted. She had had a dreadful dream, of what she could not remember. Only the words with which she awaked kept ringing in her memory: "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."

She raised herself in her bed and peered into the darkness.

"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" she whispered, half-aloud.

But there was no reply. Through her mind there surged broken recollections of what she had read before going to sleep, thoughts of Inversnaid, Griselda Grant, and the tragedy in the west. Then slowly there seemed to come almost into vision the figure of a girl in white, a large turquoise at her breast, another in her hair—a motherless, friendless girl, smitten, staggered, driven to bay, forced into using the Truth as a weapon in her own defence.

Lady Glenorchie fell back trembling on her pillow.

“Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? what wilt thou have me to do?” she murmured over and over again; but there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor, apparently, any that regarded. She was left to the darkness and her thoughts.

She said nothing to Nigel of this persistent cry of self-accusation. She was glad on this occasion when he went back to London. She wanted to be alone, to fight with the spiritual tormentor, to say something on her own behalf, to regain her peace of mind and self-esteem.

“I have not been unjust,” she insisted desperately to herself, as she paced the leaf-

less alleys of her garden. "I have not been proud, I have not been unkind. I have only upheld my rank. I have only protected my own dignity. I never meant to strike a defenceless child. I never tried to ruin my son's happiness."

"It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks," argued the inexorable voice.

"I do not," she replied, as though answering a visible accuser. "I am not resisting any high or honorable prompting. If I have done wrong I am ready to make amends. Only I cannot humble myself to her. O God, do not ask that of me," her heart cried out. "I could not come to that. I could forgive her, but I cannot ask for her forgiveness. I never can; I never will."

And yet as the days went by she felt herself slowly coming to her knees. Then there was a moment when the spiritual warrior won, when the haughty woman's soul lay humbled, in the dust, defending itself no more, confessing, and crying out for chastisement.

There had been a long night of struggle, followed by a morning of resolve. Nigel had come to her early with a journal in his hand. He said nothing; he only kissed her,

and pointed to a certain paragraph, three or four lines at most, stating that the Queen had been pleased to recognize Griselda Tulloch as Countess of Lomond.

Then it was that Lady Glenorchie, saying nothing to her son, had written the letter which Griselda, diamond-crowned and glowing with excitement, had tossed aside so scornfully.

The next morning the girl wrote her reply.

"Lady Lomond——"

Griselda smiled bitterly at the thought that the first time she herself should use the title should be in writing to the woman who more than any one in the world would have kept it from her.

"Lady Lomond presents her compliments to Lady Glenorchie, and regrets——"

Then she stopped. Could she, dared she refuse to see Nigel's mother, even though coming to make her suffer more keenly than before. No; Lady Phillida was right; she must see her, but it should be once for all.

"Lady Lomond presents her compliments to Lady Glenorchie," she wrote again, "and begs to say that she will be at Lady Phillida

Wimpole's house in Queen's Gate on Friday afternoon from two o'clock till six."

It was after four when Lady Glenorchie came. Griselda was already nervous with the long two hours of expectation. At the moment when the footman threw the door open and Lady Glenorchie entered Griselda was sitting at the furthest end of the long room. She rose, but neither came forward nor held out her hand, moved by dread rather than discourtesy. Lady Glenorchie, sensitive to all the social significance of act and attitude, traversed the room's great length, her eyes fixed upon the slight, girlish figure in simple black, relieved only by the shimmer of a silver girdle. Griselda, on her side, frightened as she was, noted half-unconsciously the richness of Lady Glenorchie's sables, and the incomparable grace which carried them.

When they came face to face Griselda bowed slightly and coldly. Lady Glenorchie responded, keeping her hands in her muff.

Now that she had come she scarcely knew what she had to say.

"I must thank you," she began, "for having consented——"

"Won't you sit down?" Griselda said, indi-

cating a chair and seating herself as she spoke.

"For having consented to see me," Lady Glenorchie continued, also taking a seat.

Griselda looked at her, but said nothing. She was thinking of the woman, not of her words. She felt a renewal of the envy and anger which had so often excited her at Ascot—envy of this air of serene superiority, anger at its tranquil exclusion of herself.

But at this moment Lady Glenorchie was not serene. Before Griselda's lack of response she felt helpless and unnerved.

"I hope I am not taking your time——" she began again.

"No," Griselda said coldly; "I am at leisure."

"I have come straight from Tunbridge Wells. I wanted to see you. When my son told me this morning——"

She stopped; she did not know how to go on.

"Yes, Lady Glenorchie?" Griselda said, with a slight lifting of the eyebrows and an air of gently ironical attention.

"I wanted to see you—I wanted to tell you——" Lady Glenorchie went on helplessly, becoming more and more confused.



"You wanted to tell me——" Griselda said, with condescending courtesy, after a long pause.

"When we saw that the Queen—my son doesn't know that I have come—I wanted to be among the very first——"

The poor lady stammered piteously; she was on new ground; she was playing a part outside all the range of her experience, and beyond the command of her imagination. She knew how to be proud; it was harder than she supposed to be humble.

"My son doesn't know that I have come," she began again. "I dared not tell him. He would not have understood—he would never have permitted me——"

"Lady Glenorchie, what does this mean?" Griselda demanded haughtily. "What has your son to do either with me or with this meeting? Do you come on his behalf?"

"No, on mine," the older woman answered, confused yet angered by Griselda's tone. "I come only on my own behalf. I have not forgotten the night you left us at Ascot——"

"Nor I," said Griselda.

"And I wanted you to understand that my son and I—that is, that I, I alone, regret,

deeply regret, that you should have been made to feel that we looked upon you—that is, that we mistook you—mistook you—how shall I put it?—mistook you for another sort of person——”

Griselda rose.

“Need we continue this conversation?” she asked quietly, but with eyes flashing and lips almost white.

Lady Glenorchie rose too, trembling with a loss of self-control such as had never before come to her, angry with Griselda and still more so with herself.

“You will not let me say it,” she cried, the tears starting to her eyes.

“I will not listen again to insult. I have already borne too much.”

“I did not come to insult you again.”

“Then for what?”

“I came to speak of what I said that night at Ascot——”

“And to ask my pardon for it?”

“No, to repeat it,” Lady Glenorchie cried, utterly beside herself, stung by what seemed to her a wilful misinterpretation of her errand. She stood white and motionless, watching the effect of her words upon Griselda’s face, as an archer follows the

flight of his arrow till it strikes the victim's side.

Griselda felt like a fallen man who has been struck a second time in his attempt to rise. For a moment the two blanched women looked each other in the eyes. When Griselda spoke it was in the low voice of passion which expresses itself deliberately and with self-control.

"Then, having said it, will you go?"

"Yes, I will go," Lady Glenorchie cried, moving nearer and finding utterance at last. "I will go, but not before I tell you that you are cruel, revengeful, and unkind. I am an old woman, and a proud woman, and yet I came to humble myself to you—to you, a girl, almost a child. I came to throw myself in the dust before you, to pour out my heart, to tell you that I have been a wicked woman, unjust to you and heartless towards my son. I came to ask your pity as I have asked my God's."

"Oh, Lady Glenorchie!" Griselda cried, flushing scarlet to the very temples.

But the older woman went on rapidly, pouring out confession and reproach together.

"Do you think it was not hard? Do you

think that after the words I have spoken to you in the past it was easy to drag myself before you now? Do you think that after all the wrong I have done you it was a light thing to come and say that you were right? After all that you have taken from us, do you think that I could come with eager step and fluent words to tell you it is justly yours and that I am glad it is in your hands? I have come, but I have come like a woman going towards death. Confession may be a pleasant thing to you; it is a very bitter draught to me, and yet you would not let me drink it. I have been hard to you, I have hated you——”

“No, no,” Griselda cried again, terrified at this sudden glimpse into the secrets of another woman’s soul. “Don’t, don’t; I can’t bear it——”

“Let me go on,” Lady Glenorchie interrupted, in the very passion of self-accusation. “Let me make an end. It is true. I hated you. I plotted against you. And yet underneath it all there was something else, I don’t know what, a something which drew me to you, but which I fought against and would not own. Long ago, in the Ascot days, I knew that it was there. Since then

—since that dreadful night when we last stood face to face—it has been calling within me like a dumb man's cry, piteous, inarticulate—only I would not heed. Now, at last, I have heeded, now I have come to you, asking you to forgive, asking you for peace, and because I am unnerved you are annoyed, and because I cannot put into easy words the torture of my soul, you order me to go. Yes, I will go. It is the crowning act of my humiliation to have come. But at least my soul will have found rest when the anguish will have descended upon yours."

She turned and moved swiftly towards the door. She had spoken rapidly, without gestures, her hands imprisoned in her muff, but with eager eyes looking down into Griselda's. It had all been so sudden, so surprising that Lady Glenorchie had almost reached the door before the girl found voice.

"No, no! Don't go! Come back!" she cried.

Lady Glenorchie turned suddenly, and they looked at each other. For a moment neither stirred. Then Griselda took a step forward, hesitating, doubtful, as though moving in a dream. Lady Glenorchie came slowly, also doubtfully, to meet her. They

stood again face to face. And then, with a low cry in which there was both joy and pain—with a yearning in which there was both defeat and victory, the girl threw herself into the older woman's arms.

That night at dinner Lady Glenorchie was for the first time in long months like her former self. Paul de Marignan was there, Nigel having brought him from London to spend a few days at Rusthall Court.

"Will you let Nigel come with me to Paris?" the painter asked.

"Yes, willingly, for a little while," Lady Glenorchie said.

"And then to the Riviera?"

"Certainly, if you take good care of him. I think the change will do him good."

Later the two men were smoking in the library. Lady Glenorchie came in to say good-night. They rose as she entered; Marignan, with his quick powers of observation, remarked that her air was grave.

"I have something to say, Nigel," she began, "before I go upstairs."

She spoke slowly with a certain hesitation, but with none of the confusion she had displayed in the afternoon.

"Don't go, Monsieur de Marignan," she

added, as the artist seemed about to withdraw. "I want specially to say it before you."

"She paused, and then went on again.

"I have been to London to-day. I have seen Lady Lomond."

"Mother!"

"She has forgiven the great wrong I have done her. I want you, my son, to forgive me too."

For an instant all three stood still and silent. Then Glenorchie moved towards his mother and folded her in his arms.

"I shall be happier now, in spite of all," he murmured tenderly.

"I too," she said.

As Marignan held open the door for her she offered him her hand. He bent low and kissed it reverently.

"Good-night, dear brother of my son," she said to him in French; and so passed on.

Marignan closed the door behind her and returned to where Nigel stood before the fire.

"Does this mean peace?"

"No," said Glenorchie, "not for me."

"And yet you are glad?"



"Yes, because now my mother understands."

"And if she understands cannot you make all the rest come right?"

"No; it is too late for that."

"You mean that you could not marry a woman who has taken so much from you?"

"I mean that, partly. I should have the air of trying to steal it back."

"You are afraid of what the world would say?"

"I am."

"That seems unworthy of a man like you."

"It may be unworthy, but public opinion has its weight."

"Not seriously. Happily I know you too well. You will not, when it comes to the test, spoil your own life and another's because you have not the courage to be slandered."

"Dear old chap," said Glenorchie, looking Marignan frankly in the face, "I know you are my friend and that you wish me well. Let me then say once for all that I could not marry Lady Lomond if I would, for she is going to marry some one else."

"Already?"

"Already."

Marignan said nothing, but turning from Glenorchie walked across the room. He seemed to be engrossed for some moments in reading the titles of the books which lined the wall. When he came back towards the fire Nigel was sitting down, his elbows on his knees, and his face buried in his hands. Marignan laid his hand upon the young man's head.

"You do not think her heartless?"

"No," said Glenorchie without looking up.

"You have not lost your faith in her?"

"No."

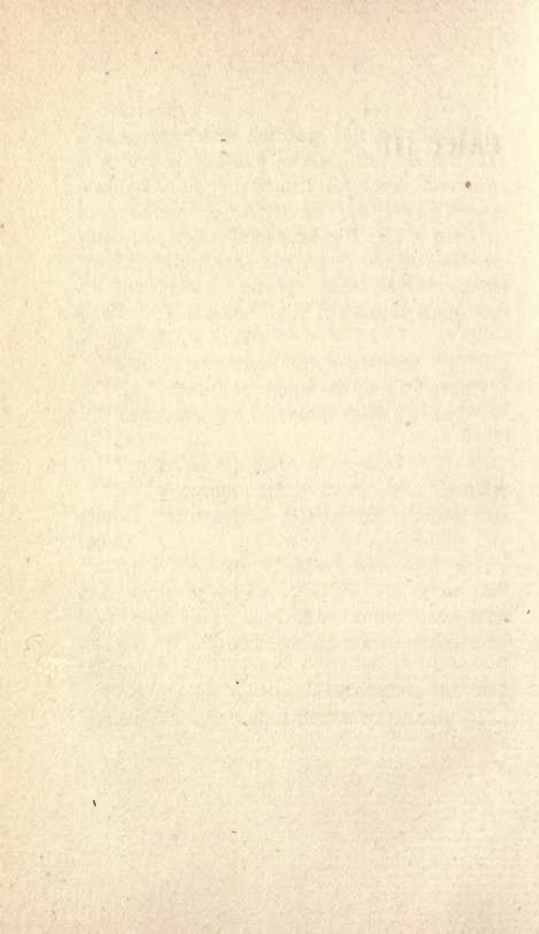
"You have not lost your love?"

The question came from him gently, almost solemnly. Glenorchie shook his head.

"Live like that," Marignan said softly and with affection. "Live like that and love like that; and then some day—who knows? The good God does not make mistakes."

Then going to the mantel-piece he took another cigarette and began to smoke.

## PART III



## XVI

"How silent!" said Lady Phillida.

"And how still!" said Grayburn.

"The Italian sky never seems so blue," Lady Phillida remarked, "as when one sees it as now, framed between those huge gray columns, or as when one looks upward at it through some such roofless expanse as this. I think it is even bluer so than when seen behind the dark green foliage of the ilex-trees."

"I never thought there were so many daffodils in the world," said Grayburn. "Just look out there through the doorway, it is like a field of gold."

"And to think that they have been blooming season after season, just like this, for over two thousand years. Paestum, one of the guide books says, was famous for its flowers. It supplied the markets of Rome and Naples, just as the Riviera does to-day."

"Only the gardens could not have been just here," Grayburn said idly. "All around where we are now there must have

been streets and squares, almost over to where you see that broad blue band of sea."

They were sitting in one of the three vast, lonely temples which mark the site of the vanished Greek city south of Salerno.

From London they had come straight to Italy, spending nearly a month in Florence. Then they had decided to visit Naples before the weather became too warm, returning afterwards to Rome, where Grayburn and Griselda were to be married. From Naples they had gone on the preceding day to La Cava, in order to have the morning in which to visit Paestum, and to reach Amalfi before evening.

Grayburn and Lady Phillida had come alone, for Griselda had been too tired to leave La Cava.

"I will stay with you," Lady Phillida had said, that morning. "Mr. Grayburn can go alone to Pesto and we shall meet him with the carriage at Salerno in the afternoon, and go on together to Amalfi."

But Grayburn had insisted in his dominant, unreasonable way, till at last Griselda had said:

"Please go with him, dear Lady Phillida. We shall never make him understand that

we don't mind missing his grewsome temples and that we could amuse ourselves better in our way than in his. For goodness' sake let us do what he wants and keep him quiet."

So Lady Phillida, with a smile and a groan, yielded to what seemed necessity. It was thus they had lived for more than a month, Grayburn, eager, impetuous, tireless, determined to see everything and make them see it too; they, straining themselves in mind and body to keep his pace, with little of the sight-seer's zeal, but coaxed on, goaded on, by the restless will they had set themselves to please. Many a time Griselda had slipped unseen out of some picture-gallery or storied church, just to rest her eyes by looking at a blank stone wall, or to give her spirit a breathing-spell by watching the black-eyed children in the streets. It was always Lady Phillida who stood faithfully to her task, making it her duty to study the guide-books and keep by Grayburn's side, to answer his questions and explain the things he did not know, to humor him and teach him, to lead him and follow him, to do everything in her power, and even beyond her power, to keep up with that sense



of mastery which now would comprehend and conquer Italy, as it had wrung its resources from the west.

Alone together Griselda and Lady Phillida spoke of Grayburn as of a wilful, incorrigible child, neither to be commanded nor cajoled; and yet they had already formed the habit of living in the spirit of his will. Against this unconscious kindly tyranny Griselda was rebellious; but forced herself to bend to the yoke which she knew must be hers through life. Lady Phillida, on the other hand, was eager to be meek, sighing to think that she should soon be free. She dreaded these moments alone with Grayburn; she dreaded his ceaseless expressions of admiration and regard; but, she told herself, these would be her memories after the wedding day in Rome. In going to Rome she felt herself climbing up to the brink of some stupendous precipice, where the path broke off, and beyond which all was blank.

So they had come together to Pesto. They had lunched in the Temple of Ceres, on the steps of which the courier and servants could still be seen feasting on the fragments.

Then Grayburn and Lady Phillida had strolled across the fields to that central tem-

ple, the great basilica, whose simple majesty and overwhelming loneliness are not only impressive to the senses but smiting to the heart.

"I don't think I ever quite felt before that this earth has a past," said Grayburn, as they went on amid the daffodils. "Out there in the west the world seemed not only new but virgin. In America one has always a certain sense that oneself is a discoverer. There is so much to do and see and learn that one feels as if one's own foot were the first to tread the spot on which one stands."

"And here," said Lady Phillida, "the very soil is hard with the ruins of another civilization. Look," she went on unearthing with the point of her parasol broken bits of pottery. "These things were used and handled by those who had turned to dust centuries before Christ was born. The very daffodils push their way up amid the fragments of what these people have left behind."

"Was there ever such desertion?" Grayburn said, awed, subdued, submitting to this overpowering presence of the past, as he rarely yielded either to emotions or to

men. "As you stand and look at that temple over there, and think that once there were hundreds of men and women crowding up the steps, that priests were chanting, and girls were walking in procession with flutes and flowers, like one of those pictures by Alma Tadema—and now they are all gone!—it is awful. It is the very triumph of Death. I never felt before that I could die. I have always seemed so living, as if my heart could not stop beating, nor my blood cease to run. Now I realize that I too shall be wiped out like the rest."

"At Pompeii the other day," said Lady Phillida, "I felt as if I had died, as if I had gone into a gray world of universal dust and ashes, where there was neither joy nor sorrow any more, but only an uniform, passionless life-in-death. Here on the contrary, I feel that I have survived. Under our feet is the past; over there in the temples is desertion; but we are breathing the air of spring, and walking among the daffodils. The very fact that we are alive seems heartless, when so much else has had to die and disappear."

"Yes," said Grayburn, "this Old World solitude where man has been and gone is

much more terrible than the New World wilderness where man has never come."

"Ah, here," Lady Phillida said, stopping in their walk; "here we have the three temples in line."

"How simple the conception," Grayburn said, "but how indescribably stately the result."

"They are like the sentinels of time, looking out on the great sea of history."

"To me they are like the primeval giants who have outlived the very twilight of the gods,—brooding, sleepless, speechless, forgotten but never forgetting, waiting for eternity."

"How different one feels," Lady Phillida said, moving on again, "before our northern ruins, at Netley, or Tintern, or Jumièges. There one also feels the past, but not a crushing, hopeless, heart-breaking past like this. Here it is the past that beats one down; there the past that lifts one up. Here the very daffodils seem to bloom in mockery of the life of man; there the ivy clings and the roses climb and twine and make you feel, however dull your heart is, that somewhere up 'beyond these voices there is Peace.' "

So they talked on and by and by when they were tired came to sit in the cool interior of the temple.

"This is the most southerly point that we shall touch," Grayburn said, when they had spoken of many other things.

"Yes; when we start from here this afternoon we shall be in a sense beginning our journey home again."

"I am glad that we have had this day together. I suppose it will be the last before we return to Rome."

"I am sorry Griselda couldn't have come."

"Oh, yes, of course. But still we couldn't have been alone like this if she had."

"I suppose it would have tired her too much."

"I hope it hasn't tired you," he asked, with sudden tenderness.

"Oh, no," she said hurriedly. "It has given me great pleasure."

"And me also," he said simply. "It has made me feel as if we were alone together in life."

"With a courier and two servants—a solitude with light and attendance."

"I like that. Good service is essential to

the best seclusion. It lifts one up above the material, and so stimulates meditation."

"I am fortunate in having friends who can offer me moments of both. After this luxurious trip to Italy my Aunt Perthshire has written to ask me to go with her into Spain. She always travels with a courier and a whole household of domestics."

"And you have replied——?"

"That I will go."

"When?"

"I am to join her on the twenty-eighth; always, of course, on the supposition that your wedding is to be on Easter Tuesday."

"And afterwards? After Spain?"

"Norway, perhaps, on the invitation of my brother Hull; or else the *terra incognita* of my next ward in Chancery."

"You are not going to begin that life again?"

"Certainly. You are taking Griselda from me. I must look for some one else."

"Do you like doing it?"

"I did," she answered frankly. "No doubt I shall again."

"Only for the moment you have no heart to put into it?"

"Perhaps. But that is nothing——"

"On the contrary that is everything. It means that you have passed beyond that phase. Life is not a fixed condition; it is a growth, of which one part is the preparation for another. We don't stand still; we must move on. It is the heart that tells us when the moment comes to go."

"Go where?"

"Go where the new work lies and the new happiness is to be found."

"Then that moment cannot yet have come to me."

"Again I must contradict you. It is here."

"Here? Where? I don't understand."

She tried to laugh, but colored uneasily in spite of herself.

"Look at me and listen," he said, in his resolute, authoritative way.

She raised her eyes to his, but his face was so near hers that she lowered them again.

"When we go back to Rome you mean to leave us?"

"Yes."

"Does that seem right? Is that what your heart counsels you?"

"It seems inevitable."



"After the way in which we have been drawn together for the past eight months, after this intimacy, after the dependence with which we have learnt to lean on you, does it seem fair to leave us in the lurch like that? What are we to do? What am I to do? Griselda, of course, will have me; but I shall have——"

"I don't understand," said Lady Phillida. "You must not talk like that."

"Must not talk? Why shouldn't I talk? Do you imagine that I will let you go without a protest? Do you imagine that I will let you go at all?"

"Mr. Grayburn," she said, very quietly, "I don't know what is in your mind. I don't know what conceptions you may have of life. You have lived so long and so far absent from our conventional methods of saying things and doing them that I am often puzzled to understand——"

"That's it," he interrupted hastily, "you don't understand. You don't understand anything of what I mean or feel or want to do. You are so far above me, so beautiful, so courted, so adored, that you don't realize how I have come to turn to you in every——"

"Stop!" she cried, springing to her feet.  
"Stop! I can hear no more."

"You shall hear more," he said fiercely, rising and stopping the way as she would have escaped from the temple. "You shall hear all. You shall hear how I cannot live without you, how I must keep you near me, how I love you, how——"

"And Griselda?" she cried sternly.

He stopped short, silent, perplexed, astounded.

"Good God!" he breathed at last. "What does this mean?"

"Yes; what does it mean?" she insisted.

He brushed his hand hastily across his brow as though something were obscuring his thought.

"Tell me, Lady Phillida," he said, coming a step nearer, "tell me what all this is. I've lost my way."

"Or is it that you are finding it?"

"I am going to marry Griselda," he went on as though stating the case to himself. "I am going to marry her—it has always been my plan—because she bears a great name and holds a great position, and I have meant to rise from her level to something higher still. I have never made any

pretence of marrying her otherwise than from ambition; and now!—O Eternal God, what a miserable fool I've been!"

He turned from her and walked hurriedly across the temple. Leaning against a pillar he looked out over the golden flowered fields, beyond the wandering herds of buffalo to where the blue band of the Mediterranean bounded the horizon. Lady Phillida did not move. A long half hour passed. She waited till he should come back to her. When he came there was something in his face that she had never seen before. There was shock, surprise, and something else, something indefinable, indescribable, like the dawning of a hope for some new, undreamt-of joy. One would have said that the Dagon of self-love had fallen, and that in its place had come a ray of light from the Ark of God.

When he turned from the pillar he came rapidly towards her.

"You too?" he said hoarsely and in the deep demanding voice of the man who cannot yet believe.

She understood him.

"Yes," she answered simply.

There was a long moment in which they

read each other's thoughts in each other's eyes.

"How you must despise me!" he said at last.

"No."

"But you will not refuse to help me?"

"No."

"And you will never leave me?"

"No."

"Then," he said, taking her arm and drawing it through his, "let us go and tell Griselda."

And so they left the temple.

## XVII

As Griselda sat that evening on the hotel balcony at Amalfi she wondered what had happened to her two friends during their visit to Pesto.

She had met them with the carriage at Salerno, and on the drive from that place to Amalfi they had been silent and pre-occupied. Grayburn, usually vivacious and restlessly interested in all he saw, had sat gazing absently into the distance, heedless of the wonderful vision of white city and curving bay, wild coast line and blue sea which spread itself out above, below and around them. Now and then he would call attention to some party of peasants who left their work to come and beg, or to some village sheltering itself in the recesses of a lonely gorge, but he did so apparently without interest, and not looking the second time at the object to which he directed them.

Lady Phillida, too, was not as she had been during their month of travel. She had never heretofore been without a certain air

of effort, easily evident to another woman's eye. To-day, for the first time in weeks, she was simply herself. She took no more interest in the beauty of the scene than did Grayburn; she appeared to be dreaming; the sense of having to play a part seemed to have left her; one would have said that she was resting, and quietly rejoicing.

Griselda had noted this without thinking much about it. She herself had been so uplifted by the splendors of earth, sea, and sky that she had no mind for lesser things. Tired and listless as she had been, she had felt comforted for the moment in the mingling of sublimity and loveliness which excited and surprised her at each new turn, as the road climbed and curved and twisted its way along the steep and deeply indented shore. The churches and galleries had wearied her; they had had no balm for her wounds nor counsel for her perplexity; but here in this abundant nature, rugged in form, flashing with color, there was something at once magnificent and maternal, stirring yet soothing, exalted yet restful, something which gave her courage and made her think that there might still be joy in life.

And now, as she sat alone on the balcony watching the moonlight gilding the sea and making whiter the white town of Amalfi far below, she again became conscious that something was changed. They had all three dined together in their own sitting-room, once the library in the days when the Capuchin friars had fastened their convent on the face of that wild cliff; but almost immediately Lady Phillida had made an excuse to retire to her room, while Grayburn had gone down to the terrace to smoke. Griselda could see him now pacing up and down under the long vineclad arbor, whose white pillars looked in that light like a row of surpliced sentinels at prayer. By and by she saw him pause; the point of his cigar made a little line of fire as he threw it over the cliff towards the sea; then he entered the hotel.

"Are you here, Griselda?" he asked, a minute later, as he opened the sitting-room door.

"Yes," she answered from the balcony. "Do come out here. There never was such a spring night since the world was made, at least not in my large and long experience. The beauty of this place is almost too great,



It hurts me to think that one can't keep it and have it everywhere; and that all the rest of life isn't made to correspond."

"Perhaps it would be," said Grayburn, sitting sidewise on the parapet, his back to a pillar, "if it were not for our own mistakes."

"At last I feel that I am in Italy," she said, inattentive to the remark which to his mind was full of meaning. "This is the Italy one dreams about, as a sort of earthly heaven. This is the Italy of Mignon's memories, and *Kennst du das Land wo die Citronen blühen*. It isn't in Florence; it isn't even in Naples; it is here. The Florence of my hopes was all white marble palaces, and terraces strewn with flowers; the Naples I had dreamed of was a city of clean and picturesque boatmen, always singing *Santa Lucia*, and dancing the tarantella at the foot of a mountain spouting fire. It is needless to say that neither has fulfilled my expectations. To-day and to-night only have I felt that the Italy I have come for is a country that exists."

"Then at last you are not disappointed?"

"Look," she said, with a wide gesture towards the view. "Disappointment here would be sacrilege."

With the motion of her hand the half-circlet of diamonds, which Grayburn had given her some weeks before, as symbol of betrothal, flashed in the moonlight.

"How your ring flashes!" Grayburn said, "even more by night than by day."

"Does it?" she asked, trying to show interest, and holding her hand back upwards so that the light may play upon the stones.

"Would you like me to take it off?" he asked.

"If you like," she answered readily, lifting her hand towards him. "But it is rather hard to put on again. It is a little small."

He slipped it off, and her hand fell.

"Suppose I did not put it on again?"

"Do you mean that you don't like it, that you would rather give me another?"

"No; that I should give you none."

"Are you serious?"

"Quite."

"You hurt me very much. You told me a few weeks ago that I treated you unfairly; I think it is my turn to say so now. Have I again given you cause for complaint? I have certainly tried to be loyal and true. I have not forgotten what you said of honor,

It stung me then because I deserved it; but I don't think I have deserved it since. If you wish to release me because you think I cannot live up to——"

"Suppose I wish to do it because you care for some one else?"

"Have I said so lately?"

"Not lately, but——"

"Then you have no right to attribute to me what I have tried to put out of my heart."

"Even though you have failed."

"I don't admit that I have failed," she said with spirit, her quick anger beginning to assert itself, "but if I had you are the last person living to tax me with it or blame me for it."

"Be that as it may, the fact remains——"

"The fact remains that I have kept my word to you, and am ready to keep it still. I know that on our journey I have not been always cheerful; I have not been always well. The traveling has tired me, and I have not had all the interest in sight-seeing that I ought; but beyond that I have done nothing to offend you, or if so, it has not been consciously. I have tried in everything to please you."

"Though not with a very light heart."

"You never asked me for a light heart."

"Unhappily, I did not."

"You didn't care."

"Because I didn't know."

"And may I ask what you have learned?"

"I have learned that—love——" The word came from him hardly.

"That love," she interrupted, with a little scornful laugh, "is always a woman's song. So you have told me; but I at least have not sung it since."

"I have learned more than that. I know now something of what it is, and that you cannot marry me feeling as you do."

"And therefore you are ready to set me free?"

"Yes. It seems to me I must."

"That is to say, that first you would marry me against my will, and now you would reject me because I am not worthy. I do not choose to be treated so. Please give me back my ring."

She held out her hand imperiously, but he only took it in his own, slipping the ring into his pocket.

"Do I understand," he asked, "that you

insist on keeping our engagement whether I will or no?"

"I insist on paying my debt to you. I will not be released through either scorn or pity."

"But if I wanted to marry some one else?"

"Then you would do, I suppose, exactly what suited your own interests. Forgive me if the words seem harsh. I state the case only as you have taught me."

"You are quite right," he said calmly. "There is nothing harsh in that. I expected some such retort, and have been leading up to it. Do you remember," he went on to ask, leaving the parapet and taking a seat at her side, "do you remember that man in the Bible from whose eyes there fell as it had been scales? Well, I have been going through some such experience as that."

"Since when?" Griselda asked, almost breathless, wondering if liberty, honorable liberty, could really be approaching.

"Since this morning. At least the effects have been visible since then; the causes, I suppose, must be more remote. I feel very much as the healed blind man would have felt had he, on looking into a mirror for the

first time, seen himself to be a hideous monster."

"Oh, don't say that. You know it isn't true."

"It is true, Griselda," he said tranquilly. "You know it better than any one; but you are so accustomed to the fact that I imagine you can stand it better than I. I don't exaggerate when I say it is a shock to me, the worst, in some ways, I have ever had. I scarcely know how to tell you in any way that you will understand; if you were a man I dare say I could do it better. Or if you had Lady Phillida's wonderful gift of intuition——"

"She has already displayed it in this case, perhaps?"

"Yes," he went on, unconscious of any secondary meaning in Griselda's words. "We have talked a little, but I will come to that by and by. As I was saying, I have begun to see myself in a new light; I suppose it is a true light, for it is not a flattering one."

"Is it Lady Phillida who has been holding the mirror up to nature?"

"No; it is I myself. I have made a discovery, several discoveries, in fact."

"Not all unpleasant ones, I hope."

"No, but the unpleasant are the more prominent for the moment, and those of which I must talk to you now. I have been thinking very seriously all the afternoon as we drove up from Salerno; and I feel it right to say that I know as well as you do that Botolph Grayburn is a heartless, cowardly, unprincipled, self-seeking brute."

"I know nothing of the kind," she cried indignantly, springing to her feet. "I must ask you never again to say such things in my hearing."

"Sit down, my dear, and don't contradict me. I know better than you. You may feel sure that I shouldn't say such things about myself if they weren't true."

"I cannot think what you mean, or what you are coming to," she said, as she sat down again.

"I am coming to this," he went on, in a half-meditative way, "that after having spent the best part of my life in thinking that my will was law and all I did was right, I see now that I have been nothing but a strong man pushing against the weak, and taking from every one all he couldn't hold."

"You exaggerate," she cried. "One's



own self-judgment is often the most extreme."

"I don't exaggerate, for I have always had some little suspicion of the true facts of the case. I suppose it was my conscience; but when it spoke I always patted myself on the back and said, 'You're a mighty fine fellow, genial, jolly and generous,' and so I went on thinking of nothing but my own success and not caring who was trampled into the dust as long as I reached the goal. That's how I've got rich. That's how you've got rich. We can't help it now; the money is there, and belongs to us. It couldn't be given up now, even if there was an owner who could prove a better right to it than we. I only state the fact, that it has come to me, as everything else has come, because I never gave a thought to what it cost to others so long as the success was mine. I have swaggered and bragged and fought my way along, making other people follow in my wake because I took from them the means to resist me. And that's how I would have married you, Griselda."

"You have always been very kind to me," she said, trying to speak gently, but feeling the truth of his words.

"When there was no reason to be otherwise. It was scarcely kindness to insist on marrying you from motives of ambition, and against what I knew to be your will."

"And why have you changed your mind so suddenly?"

"Because I have fallen in love."

"I fancied that was it."

"You suspected——"

"We could scarcely travel together as we have done for the past month, to say nothing of our life since August last, without my seeing——"

"Yes?" he asked eagerly, as she hesitated for a word.

"Much that perplexed me."

"Then why didn't you tell me?"

"Tell you what?"

"Tell me that I was in love."

"People generally find that out for themselves."

"I never should have found out anything of the kind," he said with conviction, "not any more than I should have discovered that the back of my head was turning gray."

"Then if I am not too curious may I ask who told you?"

"Lady Phillida of course."

"Told you that you were in love?"

"Not in so many words. She made me see it; or rather I made her see——"

"That, in short, you were in love."

"Unconsciously."

"And that therefore——"

"No, it was I who drew the conclusions. There was no *therefore* in what she said."

"And your first conclusion was that you must set me free."

"No, that was the second only. The first was that I myself was a selfish beast, who had taken mean advantages of all mankind, and especially of you."

"And your third."

"That I should be punished."

"How?"

"I don't know. I wish I did. Can't you suggest something? The worst of the present position is that in giving you your liberty I seem to do so in order to secure——"

"Something better still."

"Precisely," he cried, spreading out his hands with a gesture of perplexity.

Griselda laughed.

"So that the penance doesn't seem sufficiently severe?"

"It is no penance whatever; on the contrary it is—— But I feel that I ought first to pass through purgatory rather than go straight to heaven."

"In love, they say, heaven is often the first stage, purgatory but the second."

"That will never be so here."

"Are you sure?"

"I am the man born blind who knows only that he sees."

"That one should be blind on such a matter seems to me incredible."

"And to me also now. But the fact is, Griselda, I am a man of only one idea at a time. If I am running towards a goal to-day I don't drop out of the race to consider where I am going to dine to-morrow. When I have a purpose in mind I think of that thing only; when it is done, and not till then do I take up something else. When I was in America I was bent on growing rich. When I returned to England I was given up to winning your rights for you. Since coming here to Italy I have had all I could do in keeping up with the courier and seeing what isn't to be seen elsewhere. I thought no more of being in love than of having the lumbago. If it had not been for Lady Phil-

lida I never should have known it. I should have gone straight on, and you and I should have been married in Rome."

"And if you had found out your mistake afterwards? What then?"

"I shouldn't have found it out. She would never have told me."

"I think you are hardly as dependent on Lady Phillida as that."

"I am dependent on her for everything. It is simply unimaginable. I who have always been sufficient to myself am as helpless without her as a man without his hand. It would be an absurdity if it were not such a——"

"Joy."

"Yes," he said, "such a joy; but one I do not deserve."

Griselda rose and throwing her arm about his neck, stooped and kissed him. It was the first time she had done so since the day of his arrival at Lomond Lodge.

"You make me very, very happy," she said; "and I know that you will both be happy too. Our marriage could never have been other than one made on earth; this will be of the sort that is made in heaven."

"And you forgive me?"

"Yes, but only on conditions. I am going to inflict your penance."

"Which is?"

"That you take me back and let me be with you as I was when a little girl. Let me live with you and Lady Phillida. I have nobody in the world but you. I want a home. I want to feel that I belong to some one and that some one belongs to me."

He drew down the hand that rested on his shoulder and pressed it to his lips.

"I think we can arrange that," he said, "for we all three belong together. There are some ties stronger than those of blood. You're a good girl, Griselda, and I am very fond of you. But I don't believe you will want to stay with us long. Lomond Lodge and House of Tulloch will soon have not only a mistress but a mast——"

"Hush," Griselda whispered. "Some one is opening the door."

"It is Lady Phillida," Grayburn said, rising and looking back into the unlit room.

As the slender, white-robed figure advanced through the dusk of the apartment Griselda went to meet her.

"I know," the girl said, taking her

friend's two hands in hers. "I am so glad for his sake."

"And I," said Lady Phillida, "for yours and mine."

"Come and sit here," cried Grayburn. "Come and enjoy with us this perfect night."

Silently then they sat down together, listening to the breaking of the waves, and watching the wonder, ever new, of the moonlight shining on the sea and lighting up the white walls of the town.



## XVIII

It was only little by little that Griselda began to rejoice in the fact that she was free. At first she felt as if she had not strength enough to care. In renouncing one man and accepting another she had forced her nature to such a degree that now it was as if she had no more power to feel. Months of emotion had drained her strength; weeks of silent conflict with self had left her subdued but apathetic. She did not pretend to be otherwise than glad to have her liberty; only she was not ecstatic; now that she possessed her freedom she seemed to prize it less than she had supposed.

It was not until they came to Rome that something of her old buoyancy returned. Mental peace brought physical repose; rest induced strength; strength induced serenity. For the first time since they had left England she was allowed to do as she pleased. In Rome there was so much to see that Grayburn thought it impossible to see anything. For the moment he had other occupations;

he said that for sight-seeing he would return. Lady Phillida had numerous engagements in the Roman social world, where she had long held a position of distinction. Griselda was therefore left much to herself, and was glad of her solitude. She spent hours in St. Peter's, and the greater churches; she wandered through the galleries of the Vatican and the historic palaces; she loved the Forum and the Colosseum, and found a weird attraction in the ruins of the Baths of Caracalla and the Appian Way. When tired of being quite alone she took her maid to keep her in company and countenance, and drove in the Villa Borghese or out to the Janiculum Hill; now and then she ventured on the Pincian, but rarely unless accompanied by Lady Phillida.

And so as the bright spring days sped by she passed into something approaching peace. In the long hours of loneliness she began to feel her spirit springing within her, like grass refreshed by rain. She read, reflected, and prayed. She felt old and wise, as if the story of her life was closed; and yet she began again to be glad of being free. There was still one great want in

her life; that, she told herself, never could be satisfied; but, because she was young, she unconsciously fed herself with hope.

As the time drew near for going back to England she found herself dreading to return. In a foreign country she could remain obscure; in England she was already a person of some prominence. The fashionable journals recorded her movements and kept referring to what they called her romantic history. The title, which she tried to bear with outward dignity, seemed to her inner consciousness, cumbrous if not ridiculous. It rendered her conspicuous, and made her feel that she was passing under a name that was not hers. In her own thought she was still Griselda Grant, the girl who had lived in loneliness and obscurity. To be Countess of Lomond, and yet not Nigel's wife, seemed not only anomalous but almost odious. In her mind the name of Lomond was bound up with the man who, during her acquaintance with him, had always borne it. For her to assume it seemed unmaidenly; to discard it now, impossible.

Thus, the seclusion in which she lived in Rome was all the pleasanter from the knowledge that it soon must cease. The

end came even earlier than she expected. One morning intimation was received that the Queen would privately receive the Countess of Lomond, whose grandfather had long been a member of the Court. Griselda was pleased but frightened. After a conference with Grayburn and Lady Phillida it was decided that they should return at once to England, in order that the presentation might be made before Her Majesty should leave Windsor.

Griselda therefore prepared to say good-bye to Rome. She revisited all her favorite haunts, and drank at the fountain of Trevi in order to be sure of coming back again. Her last farewell she meant to take from the terrace of the Pincian Gardens.

She prepared for this act with much sentiment and some solemnity; and on the afternoon preceding their departure she went forth on foot and alone. Leaving the hotel in the Piazza di Spagna she went up the Spanish Steps, as far as the broad terrace below the Piazza della Santa Trinità de' Monti. Here she paused for breath and turned instinctively to look at the scene below.

It was the hour when the Romans begin to come out for the afternoon. A deep roar

of traffic, so steady as to pass unheeded, came up the Via de' Condotti from the Corso. Across the uneven pavement of the Piazza di Spagna an increasing procession of carriages rolled, passing on through the Via Babuino and the Piazza del Popolo towards the Pincian Hill.

As Griselda gazed downwards the great stairway itself was bright with color and sunshine. Broken flowers, accidentally dropped here and there, gave touches of warm tint to the worn, gray stone. On and against the parapets picturesque peasants were lounging and laughing. Now and then a beggar woman, brown and prematurely old, put on her professional whine and stretched out her wrinkled hand, as some chance foreigner came within her sphere of action. A little lower than Griselda a black-eyed, black-bearded, fiercely handsome contadino, wearing a green corduroy coat, a crimson waistcoat, and sheepskin trousers, stood, looking gravely down on the centre of modern Rome; just as, ages ago, some wanderer from Gaul or Britain might have surveyed from the Temple of Castor and Pollux the traffic and splendor of the Forum.

Around the boat-shaped fountain of Bernini were banks of flowers; and on the heads of apparently acrobatic vendors baskets of blossom swirled and turned, with an effect at once lovely and fantastic. Here were crimson stocks and gold-colored daffodils; here, purple irises and yellow roses; while elsewhere heads were crowned with revolving domes of violets, or masses of pink carnations.

Not less striking to the eye was a black and white procession of Dominicans, who passed swiftly and silently down the Steps, and turned towards the Via de' due Macelli; and a long line of scarlet robed German ecclesiastics, descending the Via de' Condotti, looked to Griselda like a distant flock of migrating tropical birds.

"Won't you speak to me?"

"Oh, Lord Lomond, how you frightened me!"

She turned with a start as he raised his hat; but the words had not passed her lips before she was conscious of her mistake.

"You will shake hands with me?" he asked, taking no notice of her error in title.

"Yes," she answered, crimson with confusion but holding out her hand. "I have

just been thinking of you," she went on in her hurry to recover herself and say something. "No, no; I mean of some one else."

"I am sorry the honor wasn't mine," Glenorchie said with an easy laugh. "Perhaps I have better luck on other occasions?"

The absence of any appearance of embarrassment on his part helped Griselda to regain her self-control.

"How did you come here?" she asked, making a strong effort to treat the meeting as an ordinary one. "I didn't see you."

"I came down the Steps behind you. I recognized you from up there in the Piazza di Santa Trinità. I hope you don't mind my intruding on you?"

"On the contrary," she said, trying not to blush again. "I think it very kind. If you hadn't done so I should not have seen you; for we leave Rome to-morrow."

"So soon? I knew you were here."

"Really? We have been living so quietly that I thought we had escaped notice."

"I saw you yesterday, passing the Palazzo Barberini with your husband—— with Mr. Grayburn."

"Mr. Grayburn is not my husband," she said, flushing in spite of herself.



"Oh!" he breathed with evident surprise.  
"I understood——"

"Mr. Grayburn and Lady Phillida Wimpole are to be married as soon as we return to London."

She tried to speak as though the fact had no consequence to either Glenorchie or herself; but her voice trembled, and she was evidently unnerved.

"Then I have been misinformed. I must beg your pardon for having made such a blunder."

"It is not your fault, it is mine. I am glad you have spoken of it because it gives me the opportunity to say something I have long wished to tell you. I seize this chance because I may never have another. You remember our last meeting?"

"I am not likely to forget it."

"And our last parting?"

He bowed.

"I have deeply regretted what I said to you then," she went on, doing her best to be calm. "I was overwrought and unstrung. I had no motives for revenge. If I thought so at the time I have seen my error since. For whatever else I can justify myself, for that at least I must ask your pardon very humbly."

She lifted her eyes to his, but immediately looked away again, gazing down on the revolving bits of color in the Piazza below.

"If I say that I forgive you," he said gravely, "it is because I feel that I have something to forgive. At that moment you were not just to me. I will not go back to what took place that night at Lomond Lodge; I will only say that if I hesitated then it was not for any of the motives you ascribed to me."

"I know," she said gently. "I know that you have never been anything but a loyal and high-minded gentleman. I can never cease to repent of the pain I have given you. I have come into your life only to make it wretched. I have taken from you what you could have kept but for me, and what you have far more——"

"No, not that," he interposed hastily. "There you were right. If we had married each other and I had learned afterwards who you were it would have pained me exceedingly. It would have been too late to rectify matters then, and I should have felt for the rest of my life that I was living under false pretences."

"I never meant that you should know—

certainly not until my love had assured you that all that was mine was yours. I meant even more than that. I wanted you to feel that I had no conception of place for myself other than that which you would give me. My greatest happiness lay in the thought that I was an unknown girl whom your love was lifting to your level. The only honors I wanted were those I should have received from you. It seems strange to you, perhaps, that I should speak like this. It is only because we are so widely separated that all explanations have become possible."

"Yes," he said, "I understand. We are so far apart now that we can speak freely."

"And it is best that we should do so, for at least this once, before it is too late."

"It certainly will help us to think more justly of each other. After you are married——"

"Or you," she said.

"Or I," he assented, "it will be impossible to speak with open heart, therefore we ought to hide nothing from each other now. Are you going on? If so, perhaps we might walk a little way together?"

"I was going to the Pincian," she said turning towards the second flight of steps.

"If you will come with me I shall be very glad."

"Are you staying near here?"

"Mr. Grayburn is at the Grand Hotel, but Lady Phillida and I are just below at the Hotel de l'Europe."

"Paul de Marignan and I are your near neighbors then. We are just beyond the Spanish Steps, at the Hotel de Londres."

"Look," said Griselda, as they went slowly upwards. "How the obelisk of Pius VI stands out against that stainless blue! I love to see it so, flanked by the two pale towers of Santa Trinità, as it is from just this point of view. And then it is so old! It seems to stand for the world's hoary past; while the church behind it speaks of eternity's happy future."

"And the gardens of the Villa Medici close by? What do they represent?"

"Don't they suggest romance to you? They always do so to me."

"Nothing suggests romance to me now. All I see is commonplace, and all I read is prose."

"That is my fault."

"Rather my misfortune."

"Why don't you say our misfortune?"

"I will say it if you like. I think you share the regret. It is a curious fate that you and I who loved each other should have been cut asunder just like this."

"I want to make a further explanation," she said, as they reached the Piazza di Santa Trinità de' Monti. "I have told you that I had no real motive of revenge in doing what I did, and yet I had a reason which must always have been imperative. I had to prove my mother's honor. As long as it was not questioned I could have left the subject to silence. When it had once come under discussion I had no choice but to go on to the bitter end. You can understand that, I know. I want you to do me the justice to think that nothing I could gain for myself would have been reason enough for the extreme measures I was obliged to take. A mother's name is like nothing else. I had to clear it; and I could not do so without renouncing you. There are claims to which even love itself must give way. You see that, don't you? I want you to think of me in the future not as of one who was moved by pride or ambition or selfish desire of gain. I admit that for a little while I was stirred by anger, but of that I have re-

pented. Behind that there was a sacred duty; for doing which I cannot repent, even though it means that you and I must always stay apart."

"It is sufficient to think of what I would sacrifice for my mother to understand what you would give up for yours."

"Then you have no hard feeling against me?"

"None."

"Are you saying that only to please me?"

"I am saying it on my soul."

"Thank you," she said, with the strong and simple sincerity which instantly carried Glenorchie's mind back to the night of their pledge of trust at Lomond Lodge.

They walked on for a little while in silence. Under the trees near the Villa Medici they stopped to look at the vista of St. Peter's, framed in an arch of ilex-green, and then they moved on again.

By this time the crowd was steadily increasing. It seemed as if a large part of the Roman population were being drawn by some strange magnet up the gentle slope. The irregular procession had a curious holiday air, though it was not a holy day. There were representatives of all ranks and

ages, and a strange variety of costume. A group of uniformed soldiers jostled a line of black-cassocked priests. Mendicant mothers carrying elfish-eyed babes walked side by side with picturesque officers in blue-gray cloaks worn with a grace suggestive of a toga-clad ancestry. A party of bronzed and bearded Capuchin monks, in rough brown habits and sandals, gossiped and joked, while three or four exquisite young Roman nobles bore themselves with a gravity more than monastic.

Among the pedestrians horses plunged, seemingly without regard to human life or limb. Now it was a landau filled with ladies that went by, now a public cab containing some solitary stranger. Elderly Roman princes and princesses passed on to the daily semi-state parade, followed by a party of jovial ecclesiastics. There was no haste, but no order; no visible precaution against accident, but no apparent danger.

Glenorchie piloted Griselda through the crowd, but there was no possibility of conversation until they were on the broad terrace above the winding road which leads up from the Piazza del Popolo. Here there was comparative freedom, and the greater



part of Rome was stretched out like a map before them. They sat down with their backs to the crowd and the band-stand, and began to talk of the view.

Then a long silence fell.

"I suppose this is the last time that we shall sit together like this."

"I suppose so," she assented.

"Why?"

"I don't know."

She spoke so softly that he hardly heard her.

"We say that we are kept apart; what is it keeps us so?"

"Isn't it your sense of honor?" she asked.

"You mean my fear of public opinion. They would say in London that I had tried to regain by marriage what I had lost by law. Would it hurt you if they did?"

"Would it hurt you?" she asked.

"It would make me indignant."

"It would make me unhappy."

"Why?"

"Because I should know it was not true."

"I should resent it bitterly for your sake," he said.

"And I for yours."

Then another silence fell.

"I hope we may sometimes meet when we are all in England."

"Yes, I hope so," she said.

"My mother, too, would like to see you. She understands you now. I always knew, even when we were at Ascot, that she was fighting against her growing love for you. I told you so. Perhaps if we had married she might never have learnt to know you as she does. She thinks you very noble. You will find her changed—softened and very humble. She is lonely, too. She is going to ask you to make her a visit at Tunbridge Wells. I hope you will go."

"It will be my greatest comfort in life to do so."

"You are very good," he said.

And again a silence fell.

"Perhaps we had better say good-bye," Griselda said at last.

"If you wish it," he said.

"I should like to be a little while alone."

"Then I will go away."

He rose as he spoke, and going close to the parapet stood looking down on Rome.

When he turned there was that in his face which drew from Griselda all the love and pity of her overflowing heart. In an instant

she was strong again—strong because she thought not of herself but of him alone.

Springing to her feet she caught him by the arm.

“Nigel, you shall not go,” she cried, in a voice that was low and thrilling. “We shall not be torn asunder thus.”

He could not reply. His teeth were clenched to keep back the emotion which his simple nature made no more effort to conceal. He could only look down with frank, blue, brimming eyes into the eager face that gazed up into his.

Then, by a common impulse, silently, and with clasped hands, they turned together towards Rome—Rome, which became suddenly, in their young imaginations, the city of gold and green and azure, where all beauties, all arts, all aspirations centre forevermore. For here, where the dead centuries can be counted one by one back into the very twilight of the world, there is also a strange consciousness of perpetual youth and spring; here, where Time’s work can most visibly be traced, it is also most thoroughly effaced; here, where so much is crumbling into dignified decay, there is also the restless, rapid, never-ending evo-

lution of new life, new love, new vigor,  
and new joy out of the dust of what has  
gone.

THE END



PRINTED BY R. R. DONNELLEY  
AND SONS COMPANY AT THE  
LAKESIDE PRESS, CHICAGO, ILL.



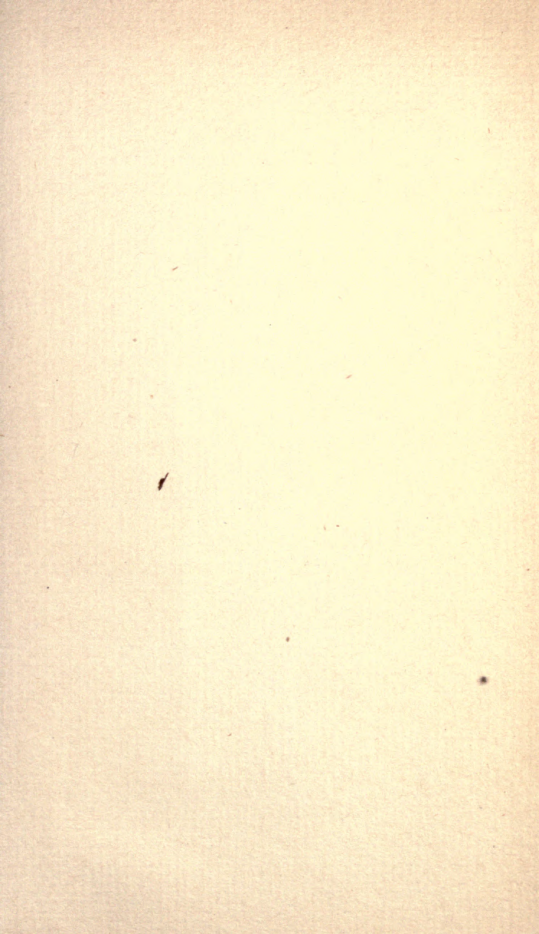


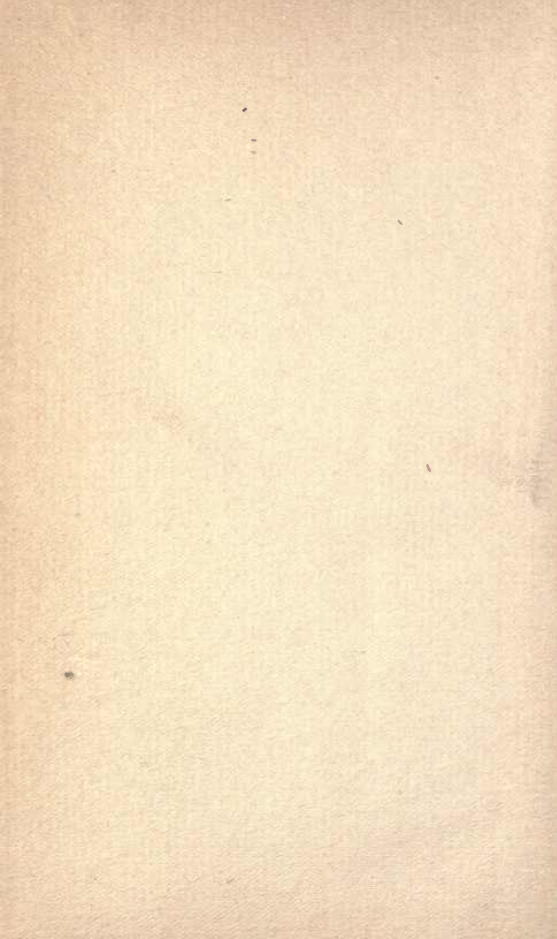












UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



**A** 000 032 270 1



